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A Disillusioned Occultist

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"And I saw Friendship, with two hands
Outstretched so pleadingly;
And while the right cried, 'Hail, sweet friend!'
The left hand said, 'Good bye!'"....

A DISILLUSIONED OCCULTIST.

A DRAMA-NOVEL

By

Charles Edward Barns

AUTHOR OF

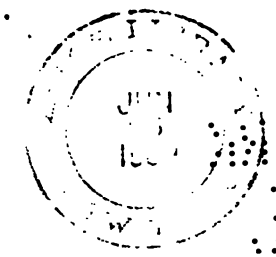
THE AMARANTH AND THE BERYL, SOLITARIUS TO HIS DÆMON, VIA CAPRICCIOSA, ETC., ETC.

1889

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A Disillusioned Occultist.

Steamship 'Deccan.' Two days westward from Bombay. Sunrise. Decks lively with bare-footed men in fluttering pajamas. An eager knot here and there wondering what the Captain will really do about it.

Briggs encounters his troubled friend Lon at the gangway; he endeavors to pacify him while prying a secret at the same time.

"You see, Briggs, the Captain is in one of his sullen, egotistical moods when no prayers will pierce him, no threats avail to swerve him from that disgraceful resolve to lock up our 'mystery,' as the cynics misname him; and if he does, Briggs, if he does—"

"Nonsense! my boy—"

"But there is danger of it—great danger; and we can't afford to risk such a calamity. It might be disciplined out of a less formidable nature by....eh? five-thirty by my watch, poor thing; it has been running wry of late with all these severities of the Fates....yes, by a little

kindly endurance here, perhaps, and a little smart antagonism there, and so drive him out of this ungracious Scotch humor which threatens disaster in our very faces. Now see here—"

"No, no; Lon, you are going at it in the wrong way. He means right. This manner of his, from which you shrink so, is only—well, only a sort of ripeness of opinion, do n't you see."

"Excellent! The genial refinement of criticism, Briggs. When one must suffer a crabbed, incorrigible, unyielding old despot to tyrant thus over one's liberties, how generously humane and apt to call these pompous tyrannies merely a ripeness of opinion! To the gods! may my opinions remain perennially green, verdant as they are, if such is the maturing of them. Now look you; I know very well....no, thank you; never smoke before breakfast, even to please the best of friends. I just got out of my bunk, after a most consumptive endeavor to sleep, Briggs, with that mumbling young mystery lying there opposite me, with the moonlight pouring through the port-hole full into his strange, pallid face....look

out! your pajama 's a-fire. Do you wonder that I prefer a breakfast to a stimulant?"

"Not at all, Lon; but you must admit that the captain is at least politic in this matter."

"I concede that, Briggs, most humbly; but policy is not the quality that should be brought to bear upon this tender affair. He is the most concrete of thinkers, to be sure, always proving his point with an exact word the complement of his opinions; but, dear fellow, tell me now. Is this not a complacent pass to bring the little wit of man that when he speaks it is as if the eternal had stolen in and superdominated his theories? With the captain's summing declarations one would think that the last word of science or art on the subject was spoken, and that all appeal to a higher tribunal that this Scotch commander's dicta would be a presumption. Yes; a sort of three-cornered crucible is the Captain's savage mind, wherein the ultimatum of human authority is melted up and minted into some fit coinage for a new intellectual Atlantis. But 'let us be thankful that things are

not worse,' as the old ballad goes—"

"Lon, you talk classics in a mud-hut. You seemed to despise, and yet shrink in awe of, this angular old autocrat as if he were some pouched and whiskered Apollo who had no business to step out of the dust of centuries and lord it over us with such supreme title. I half feel so myself at times, Lon, but after all is not this iron quality relieved by many evidences of sympathy and culture? These negative sort of aphorisms of his, you see, my boy—"

"Hush, Briggs, there goes the Captain now—Ah, what an imperious swagger! He 's like a fox-hound of mine when he is following some important trail. He need not make mysteries out of mole-hills to prove himself an able officer and a gentleman—I must go to him—"

"No; you better stay where you are. He don't look particularly penetrable this morning; and you are in no mood to win your point. You will be apt to bombard his resolves with invective instead of ensnaring them with a bit of skilful persuasion. Let him alone, I say."

"Briggs, I must carry out my former

will. You need not caution me; you cannot move me. This is no churlish caprice; it is an honest determination to vindicate an honest man's misinterpreted motive."

"Stop, I say!"

"I will not. Let go of me; don't do anything you will be sorry for. That's a good fellow; wait here and watch my conquest from a distance."

II.

First officer appears with sextant. Salutes Captain. Captain grunts, coddles the sextant tenderly, and gazes contemplatively on the dead and listless horizon.

Lon boards the uncastled behemoth, and is sorry for it.

"GOOD morning, Captain!"

"Well, young mon; dawnt y' knaw that it's rawther over-familiar to slap me on the shoulder in the ilk of that? An' is that the way you say 'Guid morning' in your country, sir?"

"Well, not exactly, Captain ; but, you see, when a man has a favor to ask of one whom the gods have made obdurate to the appeals of others, he is apt to be overbold from sheer hopelessness."

"Ah, then I am to take it that y' 'ave a favor to ask o' me. Weel, young mon, we might as weel understand ane inither nu. I 'm in n' mood to do you nur nobody else, an' thing in the way of favors this morning. I 'm done w' 'em ; done w' 'em, sir."

"Well, Captain, you at least will grant me a hearing. I must ask my question, — make my appeal whether the importunity finds concession or protest. Now, Captain, why do you persist in your persecution of this unoffending young mystery? You preach charity, yet ignore the materializing of your own precepts. Cannot you recognize the opinions of others more generously, howsoever they differ from your own? My young roommate is in every evidence of manliness and good sense a gentleman."

"Weel, an' suppose 'n 'e is? He dawnt ken enough by the Laird, to be aethin' else, I dare say. Now, whot 's the

daum callant a-daein' doon 'ere in India onyway? I never see his ilk in a' me thretty year in the So' seas. What's the hathen's business 'ere?"

"His business, Captain? — oh, I don't know, and surely it matters not. He minds his own whatever his business is, sir: a bit of heathen ethics that seems to have escaped the culture of these first-cabin casuists. No, Captain; I beg of you, don't frighten these over-credulous passengers beyond the meridian of dignity and charitable good sense. You should simply ignore the man and his ways."

"Ah, me young friend, do n't quibble on the fac', sir, on the bar', brazen fac'. I say the mon is mod, sir. What ither than a modmon would caper aboot wi' the ilk of that lang-fingered deil? Nay it's n' use. It behooves y' mightily to be warned in time. As for me, I keer naethin'. But the fus'-cabin passengers are sair frichtit wi' this mumbling bairn. They've askit me to do ane thing or the ither, and if y' cawnt keep the young coof mair to 'imsel', sir, why then, he'll git skelpt, that's a' sir, that' a'."

"Shameful! Captain, atrocious. Ah, you wonder why I grow rebellious? Chains, dry bread and a bunk in the hold, eh? Not if my will can forfend such a calamity. Ah, here comes the first officer....Officer, I beg you to intercede for me. The Captain is most incorrigible. He means mischief. See, he stalks imperiously up the bridge as if he had conquered me. But I 'll challenge him yet."

"My boy, take things calmly. Come here to my little workshop a moment. The Captain is going to take the ship's position. Can it be that the Captain really means to put your poor erratic friend in chains? Heavens! what has called down such a storm of apprehension upon his defenseless head?"

"I can but wonder, Officer. You must assist me if the worst comes—"

"Ho! the Captain calls. All well, sir. You see I watch the pale face of this chronometre as if its prophetic tick might prove my death-warrant whenever the Captain sweeps that sextant up under his shaggy brows—"

"Hup!"

"All well, sir!"

"Sixty-nine, four!"

"Sixty-nine, four, sir!.... You see, Lon, that 's the position of the ship. We will take another observation later."

"How far are we from Bombay?"

"About two hundred and ten miles.... Yes, this is a stuffy, pensive sort of a little hermitage of mine; something like the Greek anchor's caves in the old Quarantania mountain that overlook the Jordan. Never been in Palestine?—I thought you said you had. Yes, here I sit day in and day out oftimes, neck-deep in these machines of marine enginery.... The Captain?— you are right; the strangest of men. His opinions are a sort of Highland Rock of Ages: you may break your skull against them, if you want to, or you may cling to them with all the devout abandon of the forlorn creature in our chromos and primers; but you can 't move them. But keep up good courage, my boy, keep good courage. You are working heroically and we soberer ones are working with you. Only, see, the Captain is acting upon the instructions of the passengers whose persons he feels duty bound

to protect and whose commands to obey if they seem reasonable. But let us forget our woes. Come, a little promenade up and down these cool decks. Life is a sort of penance these days. Take my arm, Lon, the decks are a little slippery even for bare feet. See! this is about the only time the ship presents any scenes of animation. Ah, here's my coolie with my tea and biscuit. Here, Lon, you take this and he will get me another cup."

"Oh, I beg of you, Officer; he brought it for you. Drink it while that succulent aroma hangs about it."

"Boy! bring this gentleman a cup of tea instantly."

"Yis, sab!"

"'Yis, sab,' you black-legged Morpheus! Make haste!....That's the slowest Hindu that ever chewed betel. Lon; look at that somnific saunter. Oh, yes; he's good enough to swing the punka, you know, and all that; but, ye gods! how intolerently stupid and dawdling. Why, what do you think? On my last trip home I gave him a pair of my checkered trousers as a present. They were too loud for me, and attracted too much at-

tention. I went ashore to a reception, and left instructions with the Captain to send the boy for me in case of the arrival of despatches to sail. Well, what do you think, sir? About twelve o'clock, in the mansion of the Consul General, while I was dancing the cotillion with the General's charming and dignified daughter, in came this black young whelp with orders for me. I saw him coming down through the august ranks, and my knees began to give way. Why? — why, man, the young devil had torn my checkered trousers in two, and was wearing out one leg at a time. Imagine this distinguished assemblage convulsed at my expense. One black leg exposed nearly to the hip, the other floundering about in this dismembered leg of my flaring trousers. Humiliated? 'Well now,' as you Yankees say. The way I hawled that Hindu behind the curtains and yanked that checkered trouser off him was, to say the least, a piece of splendid comedy. In the fracas I dropped my eyeglass into his mouth, and so I had the pleasure of leading him back to the ship by the string. Did they have the laugh on me? Well, if you should

take a look at my champagne bill, you would n't — Hello! what's going on yonder. That group about the shrouds seems quite agitated about something over there. Let's look into it."

III.

Lon and the officer approach the group of loose-gowned gentlemen. The low-toned and animated conversation suddenly ceases with the advent of a pompous individual directly opposite them.

Lon meets with a new and formidable barrier to his hopes, in the person of one of his own countrymen.

"I say, Officer, one moment, if you please."

"What is it, Lon?"

"Who is that pompous, russet-nosed phenomenon of impertinence who just entered this group whereupon, so perceptible a chill fell upon the assemblage? I think I have seen him before."

"Likely enough. He is one of those over-evident members of that Ancient

Order of the Worldly Wise — those painted cosmopolities in more than theory — whose effrontery he would the world mistake for dignity ; whose candidness — of which prodigal quality he boasts of being a great and popular dispenser — is only another name for insolence. His name? — oh, I do n't know, I 'm sure. Do n't know that he has one, — that is, a name which he chooses to assume for any length of time — for the constituents of this Ancient Order shed their names as the snakes shed their coats every spring.... But, I say ; let us step back: their conversation grows animated. See ! he has fallen pray to that stunted little Yorkshireman with his pipe out and the flaps of his cap dangling over his ears."

"Rather a semblance to a damaged cartoon of a Venetian Doge."

"Let us step back, Lon, and listen.'....

"'Ow 's the market this mornin', Mr. Sweezy?"

"The market? Oh, I guess hogs is good here as anywher' in this 'ere tarnationed brimstone climate."

"'Tis eh?"

"Yes; but gents, it's no use. I can't do no hog business in India. Why them Hindus — they don't know a St. Louis hog from a porkerpine, they don't. No siree. The little game of hog is no good."

"H' exceps, sir, to play on h' innocent young whipsters on ship-board!"

"Hi! the little Yorkshireman gave it to him that time, Lon, didn't he? But see that indomitable flourish of diamonds and the bristles on that upper lip like a cat's back —"

"Well, sir. Every man to his trade, and don't you make no mistake. Some people can put their wits to perty good use; but don't you let your wit get you into no scrapes that yer common sense can't git out of; understand? Common sense, sir, that's the stuff. Common sense is the only God I got. It's my wallet and my religion, and don't you make no 'gregious blunder neither."

"Whereupon h'I begs to be delivered of any such common sense as that, sir, as got you to skelp that poor young man outen his money."....

"Who is that man you were addressing Mr. Pipps? He seemed very much hurt

at your pertinent observation."

"' Urt, sir? Well, h'I am rawther of the mind that none of my powder can pierce 'im, though h 'I do n't 'esitate to make the h'attempt, sir."

"But who is he, pray?"

"Lon, let the matter drop. Do n't get *your* foot in this ignominious prize-ring—"

"Why, sir, 'e claims to be one of the h' illustrious countrymen of yours, I dare say. 'E 's a stockman from St. Louis."

"Possible?"

"Do n't believe it then, eh? Well 'ere 's his card. Do n't mind the honorable gentleman's *alias* bein' smothered up in flourishes. Fish it h'out of the tangle, sir, fish it h' out for yourself."

"Ah, yes, gentlemen. I am familiar with his species, I might say. He is something of a toiler on the high seas, as it were; plies his trade, or rather his 'profesh,' in his exact phraseology, between your country and mine. But I wonder how he got off the beat so far as this. Officer, take a look at this card; look at the presumption of the man. The 'Honorable Mr. Sweezy' indeed. Why gentle-

men, that man is nothing but a common ship-gambler."

"Lon, you struck that young Australian with those bangled bracelets, a terrible blow then. Did you see him wince and slink off? That 's the man he fleeced out of two hundred and twenty pounds—"

"Your waird of caution is scarcely h' opportune, sir. The fac' h' is, sir, that this pompous pork h' aristocrat bagged four 'undred poun' at the b'ards las' night."

"You amaze me, sir. Four hundred pounds?"

"Four 'undred poun', sir, and not a farthin' less!"

"Lon, drop the matter; here comes the Captain. Drop the matter, I beg you—"

"But, I say, tell me the name of the unfortunate man—"

"Ah, who ither than your modmon, sir, — that wrang-'eaded young diel wha is gang to bring sair wark on a' this God-blessit ship, sir, if we dawnt chain him oop!"

"Ah, Captain, think, think! For God's sake, think a little before you talk such cowardly nonsense—"

"Lon, here, Lon! don't say another

word. The captain has an awful temper. You 'll find yourself thrown overboard in a minute."

"Thank you, Officer, I think I have been buffeted about this world long enough to be able to take care of myself, and if I mistake not, take good care of my strange young companion and room-mate, too."

IV.

Being a scrap from a notebook, bearing date, Midnight, Feb. 14.

Wherein Lon has disburdened himself of a little experience at once mystifying and pathetic.

"What torture is this! — what paradox that seems must burst and shower either a flood of fire or water upon us all, I can but wonder which! What martyrizing moments are these, and how uncertain in their prophecy of a future! 'How long, O God, how long!....' I

have been an hour or two on deck vainly endeavoring to reinstate my fallen grace into the good will of the ship; but the 'first-cabiners' will have none of me. I go to the cook for consolation; and I suppose he only vouchsafes it me in that I pay him handsomely for it. How magnanimous grows the vulgar heart under the siren bewitchery of a shilling!"

About sunset I stood for nearly an hour on deck, my hands clasped devoutly in the shrouds, my poor thoughts reverting with the mellow intensity that glows in the tropic cloud when the sun of joy has set and only a solemn, reposeful twilight lives there, shrouding the heart in all the humilities of a legend-lover and the king who had climbed barefooted up some horny step on a penance-pilgrimage. In the vanquished silence I gazed over the smooth, listless waters which lay like a gulf of quicksilver under the bronzing glow of the dying twilight, there recalling, marvelling, prophesying, wondering, like a wrecked soul on the breakers of a far twilight-land where there is no present — all is in the past. Momently a flying fish leaped from the

dead depths, fluttered silverly along the brim of the solid sea, and dropt back into the leaden gulf, leaving not a ripple to mark its hiding-place. I recalled with severest vividness all that happened me during these two eventful days, wondering now with somewhat of graver concern what the remaining time ere we reach Aden, might develop. But I soon turned from my cowardly musings with a sufficient sense of my own power of persuasion, and went below with something of that reckless abandon that a man encourages when bearding some arcanum which is as likely to prove the death of him as the fame and fortitude he demands to be his reward. At the stateroom door I grew consciously timid and hesitating, I paused listening. I remembered that sometime during the season of my rhapsodical slumbers, more awake than asleep, I heard the soft steps of my young companion as he entered and threw himself into his berth, muttering strange things in a stranger tongue. At daybreak I leaped from my berth, glanced at the young mystery: he was soundly asleep. Then I hurried to the showers, and soon

stood with the equally wise on deck, enjoying the only period of the day when animation is not a positive scourge. The engines had increased their rotary thump fully one half, and this ominous injunction was full of painful significance. "And is the captain so abject an old coward as that?" I muttered, bitterly.

A rustling within, — a sound as of the dragging of chests over the floor, roused me from my state of self probation. I drew to one side and concealed myself as I saw the door slyly open. What prompted me to do this, I know not; it proved however, a fortuitous impulse. To my surprise an inferior officer crept from our room, instead of him I had expected, surveyed the corridors as if conscious of some unwarrantable craft, and slowly advanced in my direction. I stepped before him in the narrow way, confronting him with the indignant query:

"Why do you creep in and out of our stateroom like a snake? If you have proper business there, pursue it like a man. You need not take advantage of my absence nor my companion's slumber to ascertain all your official dignity entitles

you. You will kindly remember that."

The little Officer flushed, but replied nothing. With a wave of contempt I let him pass, and he disappeared down the maze of hallways, while I, with trembling heart bent upon solving to my challenging satisfaction this nest of mysteries, flung wide the stateroom door, passed quickly in, and then with a sullen flourish, closed and locked the door securely.

The light curtains before the sleeper's berth were thrown aside, and the strange, battling young rhapsodist lay with head thrown back upon his pillow in a sort of half slumber which could scarcely have been refreshing. Somewhat troubled to find him in, I sat down opposite, contemplating the supple attitude before me, my sanest reason drowned in mazes of unquiet convictions. To be sure it was a most uncommon feature and bearing—that of my young companion whose erratic ways had been the trepidation of the ship from forecastle to firebox—delicate in outline even to beauty, a cynical curve to the lip, a deep-thinking mood about the temples upon which the little pencilings all throbbing and warm,

seemed to trace on the transparent delicacy, most wordless tragedies, and a sadness weighing heavily upon that nature seemingly born to some glad purpose. The reading of such a face seemed to bear down upon my heart like an unhappily-ending fiction, rich, grim and vivid, — rather an enervation than a uplifting of the spirit. Every feature was a speaking type. The reading of the whole strange face was like a midnight feasting over some ancient Buddhist epic: delightful not for the direct evidence in the word, but for that wholesome philosophy so mysteriously manifest between the lines. Yes, that man indeed had a face like a piece of solemn, oriental scripture: it is only he that reads between the features that reaches the hearthstone of that genial yet estranged spirit; but once there, love and love only, is the inspired growth from that moment. The true oracle lay evident to the intuitive and spiritual, not the sensual reading. He seems to be the last of some imperial, chivalrous race and fair, — the omega of some solemn tribe of 'Ormus or Ind' — last of an august republic of non-conformists.

"Who wonders," thought I, "that he is the observed of all eyes? Would not that face arrest the thoughts of the soberest of men, and turn them spinning into a new channel?" Over all, too, that mysterious influence prevailed — that oriental quality so indefinable, pervading all within the reach of his searching spirit — and so sat I, yielding ever and ever to the enticing mystery till it seemed I would walk through darkness and death to champion his purpose, if by that white, throbbing hand I were beckoned and entreated. I was that man's slave; no force could wake me, and inspirit the courage to tear away this unseen veil, and so be free. I loved my conqueror.

Suddenly the hand of the sleeper clenched convulsively, there was a slight twitching about the mouth, a trembling about the temples, and he breathed heavily. I realized that his dreams were not tinctured of any happy visions, but for charity's sake it were better to sleep oblivion to his losses; so I made no motion to wake him. Suddenly he started from his sleep like one overwhelmed of a vision; and half reclining unsteadily, stared me

in the face with such an unnatural glow of in his feverish black eyes that I shrank, and sat unnerved and speechless before him. Then for a moment that face lost its painful seriousness, and raising his hand, he traced with his frail fingers the outline of something seemingly tangible to him upon the thin air, and whispered with solemn assuring of heart, still fixing his eyes upon that dim but certain unseen,

"The albatross — the black-tipped albatross — shall it not redeem me then? Good God! why did I not understand this from the first?"

With these words which bore so grim a significance in the manner, he sank back upon his pillow with something of satisfaction in his eyes. I glanced at the door; it was locked, and in my frightened impulse I made a pass toward it. Then I reproached myself, relinquished the cowardly motive, and seated myself directly before him.

"My good friend," said I with all the sorry levity at my uncertain command, "I think I know a thing or two about the albatross business that might have escaped you in your education. I don't

think I would stake any more pounds sterling in that sort of ornithology if I were you. The *Diomedea Exulans* will never miss your interest. Let the albatross business alone, *I* say."

He only stared at me composed and dispassionately. He had evidently heard nothing ; and I was half glad of it. Then his eyes partly closed and his lips muttered a few gurgling syllables in an unknown tongue.

"Ah, what is this ?— this dark, deep fascination, welding us one by only two short days of contact, as if we were born of one mother ? What is this so stealthily twining about me, transforming every thought, action and impulse, proving me more and more that madman's slave ? Is this the sortilege of a human snake, or the righteous influence of a superior mind ? — the charm of a fetich-priest, or the love of man to man, flesh, dæmon and spirit !" I knew not,—dared not answer my dumb heart's questionings with any gleam of reason. I simply stared at him.

Suddenly that supernatural quality seemed to melt away, leaving the man more human. The spell seemed broken,

and I breathed freedom once more. He arose, dashed a cup of water over his forehead, then seated himself upon a hamper by, and, to my delight, grew at last communicative and fathomable.

"My good friend," said he with the intonations of a child just learning the language of its mother, "my days have been like ten thousand living fibres woven mysteriously into the burning thread by which I hang from heaven. God! if I only had the courage to sever it. My world has been a dead man's world, running not counter the sun, but with it, and with its sweet life and light ever hidden from me — lost in the antipodes. All creeping things are phantoms; all presences material or divine, merest images; all of love, illusion; of death, atoms. My globe has halted in its mad orbit, the great, sweet earth lies dead on my antipodes, while I live on a being of utterest darkness. My thoughts, ideals and reflections all revert — crawl backward from the thing they loath: the eternal. The greater, the spiritual and transcendent portion of my nature is long gone before; only the dry husk remains."

I affected the most complacent non-concern at this deliberate confession, and forthwith proceeded with more trivial matters.

"But, my friend," said I, apathetically, "that has nothing to do with the four hundred sterling sheckles you lost at the board last night. Come now; just medicine yourself with a little western-world exoterics —"

A hiss of disapproval followed by a contemptuous sneer, cut short my remarks. I turned to him; his whole face shone like a single eye in the forehead of some lower-world apparition — some heaven or hell through the darkness he had thrown up between us as from a stifling and poisonous censer. Recognizing that all this counter influence of mine was a simple aggravation of my own misgivings, I nervously unlatched the door, glanced at the young dreamer — this one new mystery of my perplexed days — stepped boldly out, and left him to his wanton vagaries. I somehow felt so smothered — so belittled in his presence. The air seemed a godsend: my lips parted irresistibly to a prayer of thankfulness. I

went on deck, sought out a secluded retreat and there seated myself, back to this floating cityful, feasting my heart's content on the changeful horizon. A reverie — a sort of ecstatic, tight-fitting oblivion — displaced these captious humors, and I gazed upon the listless, tropical ocean as with senses deadened. I thought over my task with the dispassionate logic of a Buddhist, and rallied over my disenchantment bravely. I must either be master or slave; either hide myself in some obscure quarter of the ship: confessing myself therein an inefficient solver of the problem so thrust upon me, or turn unperturbed Stoic, befriending my compeer through every pass or circumstance to the last. Then I laughed at my folly, awoke amazed at my womanish reluctance, threw aside this spirit of yielding, — this ungallant wondering whether or not these innocent eccentricities of his were really of a satanic importation — rose to the realization that it was mine to stand champion against a whole ship full dogged of their apprehensions, or they would soon have my pale friend in chains.

Thus strengthened of resolution, I

went below. As I neared our stateroom I saw my companion pass down the hallway to the showers, so I glided into our little apartment somewhat relieved.

There stood that mysterious chest like a grey spectre gloomily inviting. It was unlocked. I stood with my back against the door and contemplated it. The more I stared marvelling, the stronger the impulse to break the seal of perhaps false honesty that deterred me. I locked the the door, and threw off a garment or two that I might have proper excuse for barring his entrance should he surprise me. Why should I not know all since it was mine to be friend him? "My motive is right, my deed simply follows my heart." With this half false logic, I fell upon my knees before the odious spectre.

I touched it; as my finger-tips came in contact, there was disappointment. It did not seem to feel as I thought it would. I withdrew, paused an unwilling moment, and then with a brave sentiment at my lips, fell again to my task. I drew the chest to the middle of the room and threw up the cover.

The first thing that stared me in the

face was a human skull with a bullet-hole in the side! "Well," said I, "what is here to frighten me? What man so poor that God has denied him a skull?" There was a pile of books: a volume on the occult sciences of the Nepalese, in Sanscrit; a manuscript of astrological symbols, well thumbed; a note-book written in Hindustani and quite as unintelligible English. Below these was the most interesting object: a musical instrument somewhat resembling a Spanish mandolin, the bowl certainly a very precious piece of Indian workmanship, deftly inlaid with turquoise, lapis lusuli, ill-cut rubies and diamonds. There hung from the stem a little case curiously made of the skin of a Tic Polonga — a huge snake of the orient — and my madness to the paradoxical task moving me in that strange moment to most any extreme, warrantable or not, I untied the ribbons and drew forth a piece of ivory upon which was written in a feminine hand, almost obliterated, these strange words: —

> To him my best beloved, —
> Light of my light — world of my world!
> Him who with me alone

Estranged in the Rohiikhand jungles,
Dwelt through these years! To him
Who taught me to love, till I,
An outcast from the Fates,
Learned of this new-world God!
To him, O Destiny-Mother,
I bless this charm of my God-sire,
This *unintelligible*
Of all earth-things thrice the dearest.
Lo! here in the blood of my bosom,
I plead thee to shield him, O Vishnu!
And thou too, the god of my Star-love.
And thou too, his Savior—his Christ-God,
Shield him forever, forever!
See, see! on my breast lies the serpent:
It stings and I perish, O Husband,
Thus, thus dies thy Princess Comancha!

This then, which lay so appealing in my trembling hands, was the secret of my poor companion's life. This was the one passionful shrine in the temple of his love, — the very altar-place where lay prostrate his poor riven being a sacrifice to so exalted a devotion. Ah me! could that stricken panther far, far estranged from his jungle haunts so native to his wild nature, have peeped in upon me as I sat upon that floor with the sweat of wonder at my temples and the implements of a recondite and mystic infatuation lying about me, would his first word have been a curse or a blessing? Would he

have struck me down at my presumption, or would he have felt a great burden lifted when he realized that another and a mutually understanding and believing soul would share the horrors of a burning thought that knows no trap-way of disclosure? Extreme joy or extreme sorrow — even to madness — cannot be contained of one shut breast. It will burst the brave confines of the hardiest nature, — wreck the peace of the sturdiest will, shatter the sublimest reason.

With the warm recognition of his devout weaknesses and a tender interest in every treasured muniment that lay outstretched so pleadingly before me, I hastily began replacing the precious trinkets with as careful a precision as seemed my policy; and rising thence, a sort of reactive feeling of guilt at my brazen importunity seized me, and a turmult of apprehensions chastened me on to the task of restoring the solemn effects to their treasure-house with all due caution.

There was a green silk bag in one corner of the chest upon which the skull had rested so impishly, and replacing the

grim reminder upon the ominous bag which I scarce had had the courage to pry into, I was not a little startled to see that the skull would not remain in the position I had found it. Again and again I sat the sallow skull upright on the green bag and its unwonted contents, each time to be defeated. Down this steep incline of mystic machineries the skull would roll, and put me to the task again. Finally, resolved to pry into the unbecoming paradox with a dash of brazenness I felt me quite capable at this indulgent pass of my searchings, I pressed my hand to the silk bag — horrible! — it was warm. I drew back with a little oath punctuating my amazement. I could not convince myself that my conjecture should prove a reality, and so repeated the movement, pressing my fingers to the mysterious green silk bag with a trepidation that frightened me little less than the realization of my discovery. I thought I felt a perceptible throbbing within — a distinct pulsation, feverish and fluttering; it might merely have been my own heart at my fingers' end, or a fiction of the momentary wonder. "Life!" I muttered

loudly enough to stir me from my own stupor of amazement, and so tumbling back the few remaining tools of Tophet into that odious and satanic treasure-house of love-tokens and mysteries, I drew down the lid, pushed the chest back under the berth of my erratic friend, and stole from the room. A moment later I stood on deck in the clear, thankful air.

What had all this afforded me?—nothing. What had I gained that in the least recompensed for all I had lost: my own self-respect in a measure, my own fortitude, my own convictions of his sanity. By doing that which I believed would eradicate all peril and mystery, I had only increased my ills and rendered myself vulnerable to a score more in the fall of my courage. Beneath all, that sickening self-reproach added to my many spiritual ailments occasioned by the advent of this indefensible young prophet of occultism in our midst, commanded me most reprovingly; and I choked back this virtuous remonstrance the while I gloried in it, for what a hardened creature would I not have become if I felt no shame for my impulsive curiosity. But now the thread

of that burning scourge is somewhat worn blunt — blunt enough to scrawl my miseries upon paper that seems to blush in my face most superciliously, and so let me to bed with a prayer on my lips even as the contemptible king with the two mad, galling eyes of Hamlet upon him from every crevice and hidden port, "all may yet be well!"....

V.

On deck, nine A. M. Four bells call all promenaders down to breakfast. Briggs pacing up and down moodily is encountered by his friend Lon whom he now accuses of viler eccentricities then his mate.

Another inovation with the season puts Lon in a belligerent mood.

"WELL Briggs?"

"God bless you, sir, how startled me. I had no idea I was so far sunken in my reveries as that. What news, good fellow, what tidings from lower quarters?"

"None worth the mention, Briggs, none worth the mention. I have at last discovered the reason of the Captain's recriminating vigor, however, in his persecution of this young mystic; it seems that St. Louis pork autocrat has fleeced him out of four hundred odd sterling 'quid' as they say under the eaves of the Seven Dials. Now I am content to call that an 'added brick to his sarcophagus' as our genial wit the first officer puts it; but why the Captain thinks that the clinching argument in his plea of the man's insanity, I ca n't exactly see."

"Well, I suppose any man that suffers such a rascal to perpetrate his pet atrocities on a ship bearing the colors of a civilized people, is about as fit a subject for his own bread and water regimen as anyone. I say, Lon, it would make a picture to see the Captain and this pompous, bediamonded gambler shackled up together in the hold—"

"Nonsense, Briggs; look you! I never told you of my explorations last night in the young man's hampers and chests, did I?"

"No, and I trust you will tell no one

else if it is the truth."

"Ah, yes; that glance of reprobation is good medicine for me, and I swallow it like a man; but I felt that I must know more of him whose ways I assume to vindicate, and to any otherwise unwarrantable extreme to accomplish this, I shrank not, nor shrink now to confide in you."

"I am thankful for your confidence; but I don't believe I care for any information gotten in such a compulsory —"

"Now, see here, Briggs, you must not cross me. You have been my friend all through this uncomfortable affair, and because I seek points to fortify my client, you would reprove me."

"Why did you not ask him?"

"A nonsensical question. You know about what information he would have vouchsafed me: a look of scorn, a shrug, a few mystical glances, and then a rambling sort of soliloquy about as removed from the interests of men as is the planet Jupiter. Now, drop that inquisitorial look, and remember I am talking to you with a most open and stainless conscience."

"Well, proceed; I am all ears."

"Come here behind the wheel-house.

I do n't want to be overheard.... Now as usual in such affairs of extreme mystery and interest, there is a woman in the case —"

"What! not in the chest you broke open —"

"Will you be quiet? I said 'at the bottom of the case' in hand. What idiocy, Briggs, to think he has a woman locked up in one of his hampers!"

"Not at all unlikely, from all I can gather."

"Well, you must n't gather figs from thistles, you know, Briggs, according to scriptural *fiat*, nor nonsense from affairs of so serious a nature as this. Well, now, do let me proceed. There is a woman at the bottom of this sublimely interesting matter — an Indian Princess, I take it — with whom this young mystery has estranged himself in the Rohiikhand jungles. I found certain evidences that bear out my theory — evidences of so tender and pathetic a nature that I need not name them to assure you that I am positive on certain points."

"Ah, indeed?"

"You are sceptic, Briggs, though it ill

becomes you. Now if I could only ascertain who this tender Princess Comancha is — the woman who has caused all this palpitation of impressible hearts, the unknown quantity so necessary in our solving the factors —"

"I do n't know that it bears much upon his present unenviable position to find out who your Princess is. The daughter of a fallen Rajah perhaps. It certainly makes a pretty and altogether chivalrous setting to the strange picture, and rather a patent conjecture as well."

"Ah, Briggs, you have an Aladdin-like sort of nature after all, as well as an indulgent one; but we must wave away all these delicious tracings of Paradise upon so austere and threatening a background. It is scarcely practicable to the solving of our new code of policy. But one thing let me assure you, Briggs, with more than ordinary security; and that is, I walk no longer in the darkness of uncertainty. This chasm which has stood darkling and menacing between my friend and me, is now closed and closed forever. At last one human mind understands him, even though it be superficially. Reason there

was and is, and that of a very dignified and superior quality, in his madness. My mission is plain at last: at least one human sympathy that is not afraid to act, is his.

"Well, well, Lon; what do you propose to do with such energy? I declare, I half believe you are turned as red-coat to our opinions of your sanity as did he whom you would defend. What do you propose to do?"

"I propose, Mr. Briggs, my tried and trusted friend whom I am sure will be guilty of no unbecoming observations, I propose to proselytize this whole ship of doubters to my faith, sir, and my hope should not be in vain; the honesty of a man's purpose —"

"Stop a moment, Lon, here comes the captain's coolie."

"Marster Sab!"

"Well what is it?"

"The captain, sab, want-a to see you in his-a cabin, sab, right 'way, sab!"

"Ah, mischief, mischief!.... Wants to see me in his cabin, eh?"

"Yis, sab, right 'way, sab!"....

"Strange these black rascals can never

learn more than scrape the edge off their step-mother English —"

"Step-mother English is good, Lon."

"But hi, ho! the captain wants to see me in his cabin. I know what that means."

"What, pray?"

"'Wormwood!' as Hamlet says."

VI.

Interior of the captain's cabin. Maps, charts, a hammock, sextants, globes, and in the smothered midst, the Captain with mein of marble.

Lon beards the lion in his den with a villain's assumed bravado.

"Boy, swing that punka!"

"Yis, sab!"....

"Boy, swing that punka hard."

"Yis, sab!"....

"Boy, swing that.... Ah, sir, you are here at last, eh? I have been all over the ship for you."

"Yes? Well, you did n't happen behind the wheel-house or you would have

found me without so much effort."

"Behind the w'eel-'ouse, eh? Well, that's n' place for you 'pears to me, these interesting times!....Boy, swing that punka 'arder!....Sit thar, sir, where y' will catch the only breeze this 'emisphere can boost, sir, now then listen to me!—"

"Captain, do you really sleep in that hammock-like bunk? Why, it 's a regular coffin. How do you manage to pray for repose in so unwholesome a reminder?"

"Ah, me young frind, y' 'ave bean bibbing the black and sair spirits of that pale room-mate o' yours, I 'm mickle afeard."

"But what has transformed that innocent young man into such a goblin in your eyes, Captain? You look as if you would like to chain us together to a spar and throw us overboard."

"Weel, young mon, afore I dae aethin' o' that ilk, I 'll want to be tauld a' ye ken aboot this young bairn nu."

"Bah! Captain, this is a veritable Ship of Fools."

"An' what am I to mistryst from that, sir?"

"Simply that this false, sickly and unreasoning sentiment going the rounds of

the first-cabin passengers, Captain, would do ill grace to a shipload of chimpanzees."

"Ah, weel, sir; muckle or little as men respect your opinions, sir, I do n't keer ae 'thin' aboot them. Do ye think f 'a moment, sir, that I askit ye 'ere to share your opinion? The fac', sir, is what I ha' use fa, the fac'. Nu, sir, what o' him? — where 's 'is hame! — what 's 'is trade — 'is affairs 'ere in India. I' ave commawndit the crew to press the ship on to Aden, fa I am tauld that this room-mate o' yours sir, is a modmon; na'thin' lang nor short o' it — a modmon — an' ef 'e is?"

"Well, if he is, Captain — why do you hesitate?"

"Weel, sir, y' keemed that frae the first. We 'll 'ave to chain 'im up, sir, that 's a'!"

"Captain, listen to me. You are simply about to make the grossest, bitterest mistake of your life. You have need to go most cautiously in this affair. You are dealing with no common inferior, and I can vouch for it. This young Englishman is, or rather has been, a student of occultism who has extranged himself in the jungles beyond the Punjab, buried in esoteric lores and Hindu mystics for a

term of years, seeking what many a sublime mind before him has sought and failed to find, and many a follower to come shall seek with the same spiritual abandonment, namely, the root and essentiality of things, — life, its subtile why and unanswerable wherefores. He has simply become disillusioned, that is all; and now wants to go home to his father and solve life as most of us poor compromizing mortals solve it: by living it."

"Weel, weel, what o' that?"

"Well, Captain, his semi-barbarous life in the strange midst of these curious entanglements, and this long, forced contact with theosophical hermits of the upper provinces, has simply made something of a mystery of the man; that is all. Those are foolish fears of yours, and totally unworthy you. Moreover, the man is ill; he may not survive the journey home. You might, without stooping to aught beneath the level of your dignity, Captain, which we all honor with due respect, soften your rigorous policy, and medicine yourself with a little of that charity you discoursed to us about on Sunday."

"Don't wander aff your subject, sir,

do'nt wander aff your subject nu."

"Now see here; I will promise to keep him near me until we reach Aden, and there, if you demand it, you can give him an honorable or dishonorable discharge, as you wish. But in the meantime I shall expect at least that you will assure these cowardly manikins that my pale young companion is not curst of the seven devils with which you discredit him."

"Seven deils or na seven deils; he's mod, I say. War you in the gentlemon's cabin las' night?"

"No, sir. Why, please?"

"Ye knaw that your St. Louis hog-mon skelpit him to the sair extint af four hundrit poun', eh?"

"Well, that in no way concerns us, Captain, not in the least. He has sufficient left, I dare say, to buy this ship and blow it to the moon with his occultisms if he took the capricious notion."

"Exactly, sir, exactly. An' that is precisely the uncanny notion I suspeckit 'im of takin', sir, afore we can git to shore. There are by far more unco things than this, sir, in our every-day life. Wot 's in

that chist he keeps locked up so keerfully?"

"Ah, that vile little inferior officer has been posting you, has he? Well, Captain, when you want to know anything more about this man or his effects, kindly consult me. Do n't send any sneaking little spies down to our stateroom while we are out or asleep; it wont do."

"If 'e had posted me, as ye cauld it, I would na askit ye. An' nu I say again: what 's the contents o' that chest o' his doon thar?"

"Well—but let me think. Books, manuscripts, papers, skulls, mandolins, a pickled snake or two, razor-strops and quinine — as faithfully as my memory serves me."

"Aw!"

"Anything further this morning, Captain?"

"Yes; sit doon thar a moment longer. You knaw thar 's to be an entertainment on deck to-night in aid o' the Seamans' Orphans' Fund, do ye na?"

"Ah, mischief, mischief!....Yes, Captain, I have heard substantial rumors to that effect."

"Weel, sir, those rumors will prove reality withoot a doubt. Nu, sir, I want to knaw this. Do you think that ye ken keep your modmon oot o' the sicht of mortals a-while the thing goes ane? Tell me."

"God bless you, Captain, I can no more than try."

"Weel, that 's a' then....Come, 'ave y' been to breakfast?"

"No; and thank you for the courtesy, but I think I'll remain here in the air a little longer, sir."

"Yes, I am o' the mind that y' need the air awhile ye can get it—eh?"

"That 's an unbecoming remark, Captain: but let it pass. Good morning, sir....God help us! What may not this night bring forth? '....

VII.

The extreme bow of the Deccan. Lon and his mystery stretched lazily side by side on wicker divans. A score of huge albatrosses circle above them as if enchanted.

Lon undertakes the dubitable task of amusing while estranging far from these inflexible alarmists, his companion and charge.

"AND what may I call you then? Surely a man of your wit and wisdom should own a distinguished title, though I have read in my boyhood books that you Americans eschew titles; come, sir, what shall I call you?"

"Call me 'Lon.'"

"Lon?—Lon? What does Lon mean?"

"Why, it means — well, it means me generally. Is not that enough of a meaning?"

"Perhaps, but no man should have a meaningless name. That's where the orientals are wiser and more reasonable. This one is named after his crooked legs; this one after his dark eyes; a third is named after some episode contempora-

neous with his birth or naming feast. As for me, they call me 'Mahya.'"

"Which means?—"

"It means 'exile,' or 'runaway.'"

"Then let me call you Mahya."

"You may; in fact it would please me. I could think of you as something better than a mere stranger if you call me Mahya."

"But suppose your crooked-legged man becomes straight-legged; your dark-eyed man, blind; your episode-named man, moved to a new country where the episode is unheard of; and your Mahya-man, no longer a runaway, but a citizen. Do you change their names again?"

"Why so? I shall be called 'Mahya' to the end of my days; but let us not say more about it, Lon, let us say no more —"

"Ah, you would have me keep silence on the mystery of your life, and still call you by the name that suggests it?"

"You are very kind, Lon, and have been so ever since we met. I know you would do me no unkindness now. Let the matter of my history sleep a little longer in the sepulchre of my heart. I is not time for it to wake. The Nyaga

will wake it when it is time, and you shall become enlightened. As for now — do you see that great, black-tipped albatross yonder?"

"That hugh one that circles so continually above us?"

"Yes. That bird holds a human soul — the soul of one who watched over me many, many holy years. That soul ascended and has since taken a propitious form. I have seen that soul in a flower that bends over my pathway; I have seen that soul in the first star of morning, and the last star of evening on my long, long journey thro' the jungles from my haunt in the Rohiikhand. It accompanies me wheresoever I go, directing my ways, encouraging, inspiring, cherishing. For the present it has taken up its home in that huge white-winged albatross — see! how near it comes. I could almost speak to it now."

"Yes, I would speak to it if I were you. Ask it how it was that with such a guardian soul over your ways, you managed to get scalped about four hundred pounds' worth last night?"

"There are mysteries in all things. I

am content to trust what men despise; that albatross shall redeem my fortunes as it has redeemed my nature from what seemed interminable bondage. I am happy now. I have realized its presence."

"Shall I read to you, my good friend Mahya, or would you rather lie here listlessly and chat? Shall I amuse you, or would you rather amuse yourself by amusing me?"

"I would rather not speak of myself now. You may read to me if you will. You are so kind. I scarcely realize in what opprobrious light all my quiet ways are construed on this conventional ship. Look at me, man! Do you fear me?"

"Fear you! Why should I?"

"But everybody does; everybody recoils from me as if I were some curdling monstrosity just risen out of Trophet to appal and hiss at him like an incarnate snake. Of course I am strange in more than the stranger's strangeness — an anomaly amid this regular type of my countrymen. Of course my clothes are half barbarian: this robe of silk, these unshod feet, this turbaned hat, this bared neck and bosom. I know it all, but I cannot

help it. They should not shrink from me as if I were some goblin merely because my face shines like a pale *ignis fatuus* through the bronze twilight, and because my fingers are like flat-headed snakes — but what am I talking about? You are my friend. I admire your courage, reverence your humanity in taking up with one whom all despise. And I shall reward you, be assured, I shall reward you as nobly as becomes us both."

"But what makes you think everybody shrinks from and despises you so?"

"Silence, man! Have I not eyes to see?—ears to hear?—am I not sensible of all that goes on about me? I heard your conversation with the Captain in his cabin. He instructed you to take me aside and keep me away from the rest of the ship that they might prepare for their evening festivities, and I heard your promise to him which you are now fulfilling."

"But you were nowhere near at hand; how did you hear it?"

"Ah, good friend, there is more mystery in a mustard-seed than your blunt eyes will ever pry into. There are minds which intense discipline has given power

to perceive what only the gods are privileged; to hear the unheard melodies and taste the sweets that never yet touched a human tongue. I am a spirit — no longer a man. The carnal, the animal, the flesh is melted out of me in this intense fire of occult devotion; only the imperishable soul remains. My mind and sympathies lie on the surface of my body, while yours, like those of all men, lie hidden and concealed within. I can hear from afar, can peer into the Unknown, can taste the heat of a star by parting my lips, can take the eternal in my two hands so, and juggle with it as a child, while you sit and wonder of its mysteries....But why do I speak thus? You can never understand me — never can realize me. You are dead; I am living. Can the sepulchred understand the living? — the coffined, the quick? So let us proceed to calmer things. Thank God you are my friend. You will not let them put me in chains; I am not mad, not strange, not a heathen, not a devil. You will defend me, and I shall reward you nobly. Take my hand, thus — thank you; you may read to me now!"

"Great God! what means this all?—what means this all?"....

"You are disturbed, Lon; I am grieved to see it. It is better for me to remain silent; I can at best only inflict, even with a studied desire and effort to enlighten you."

"Name something, my dear Mahya, name your favorite. I may have it in my hamper. You know I carry a hamper of books with me wherever I go. Yes, I have a collection of ancient and latter-day Saints and Satans in rags and Russia, and I know I can strike a chord of sympathy if I rehearse you their contents."

"I have no favorites in a Western tongue. What is the first on your catalogue."

"The first?—well, they are all first in my heart, though, let me see; not all are first in my thought. There's Bacon—"

"An over-rated boor. The author of an inductive process that does n't induce. Not worth half a line of the masterly apothegms or our mystic Patanjali. But go on, Lon, go on; only, by the gods, skip Bacon."

"Well, then, there's Ariosto — "

"A puddler in a bastard tongue. Italian was never made for a thinker and a reasoner. It 's only fit for mandolins and red lips — for sighs and whimpers; not subtle magnificent thought. Skip Ariosto; what next?"

"Well, here's Plato — "

"An obstreperous jackdaw. What! how would you have liked a grimy, besmirked, pug-nosed individual with an unsavory reputation as a symposiarch to a feast of courtesans and wife-beater at that, come quizzing in at your workshop and the sacred hearth-stone of your home, demanding of you how much of your own business you know? You would probably tell him that you just knew enough to mind it, and that's more than he knew about his. No, thank you; Socrates in his place; but when you talk of philosophy what becomes of the little Socratic parhelion in the great blaze of the Ramayana? Where is Socrates when the *angas* are spoken? He was wise, but enlightened — ah, never!"

"A subtle distinction, Mahya."

"Subtle but true. Come, what next?"

"Well, here 's Emerson."

"Who ?"

"Emerson — Ralph Waldo : an American."

"American what ?"

"Why, poet, sage, philosopher, religious-mystic — "

"An American mystic ? — how felicitous ! Think of it ! A mystic philosopher out of the jungles of the Rohiikhand. Ludicrous, is n't it ?"

"I am sure I don't know. It does n't seem to strike me very forcibly ludicrous. All these I have named are dear to me. I have read them in my *jinricksha* by the light of a Japanese paper lantern down the steeps of Fusi Yama ; I have read them in my palanquin by the aid of a Chinese tallow dip along the banks of the Yang-tse ; I have read them on elephant-back by the light of a thousand glow-worms caged in a goblet on a hard journey through the Tamil jungles of Ceylon, and they have kept me proud and happy company through the steppes of Northern India. I do n't believe I enjoy submitting to my idols being overthrown in this wanton manner."

"Ah, Lon, you should not bow down to idols so low that it appalls you when I play the liberal iconoclast. Ah, my dear good friend, you do n't realize; you can never realize. All western thought is false; its birthplace is an illusion, its nature the issue of a brutal and forced marriage of a brawny, forceful occidentalism with the refined, mystic and sober spirit of eastern occultism. Look at Greece; how majestic stands that golden statute of Athena! Bah! melt out the oriental refinement of its ore and see what a filthy alloy remains. The whole world has plagiarized India, and each country taken the boast to itself. Egypt came here first and played marauder; hence rose the Ptolemies. Then came Greece sneaking in at the back lattice and ravaging the holy altars; hence rose Thales, Pythagoras, Timochares, and Plato. Then came a filthy Arab; and he played havoc for a time among the delicate and subtile divinities; hence rose Avicenna and Alhazen. Then came your Dutchman, and your Frenchman, and Englishman, and stole away the few sorry laurels that remained; hence rose your Kant, and your Comte;

your Hegel, and Hume ; your Bacon and your Berkeley. And now another has been over half a globe on another forage, eh? An American, too! Well, well; what a respect the world shows its mother-mystic, — its maternal science and philosophy. Shame on you! No; I don't want any Emerson. I thought you Americans more magnanimous than that — but never mind; go on; what next."

"What next? Why, nothing next. My heroes are all unpedestaled ; my prophets proven churls ; my gods, pilferers and back-window eaves-droppers. No; the orient has spoiled you for anything native or genuine. What care I where my thought comes from as long as I get it? Name a proposition or a proverb that you cannot find in the mouth of some dozen epigrammatists away back to the Pleistocene age. Nonsense with your flayed and ravished goddess of Indian philosophy and science! She has been a mere blandishing illusion. Come, wash your hands of this red-fingered, betel-chewing occultism. It 's ruining a powerful and splendid mind. Come, man ; you must love, hate, joy, aspire and make

the most of life in common with us all. Wake out of this mad trance — this nasty opiate of Eastern mysteries that has narrowed your mind down till you now look the broad world as through the eye of a needle. You are not enlarged, you are belittled; you are not made greater, you made smaller by this unwholesome reeking incense burning to so false a deity."

"Do not speak so...."

"Ah, does it sadden you? — forgive me, my dear Mahya. Come while it is yet time. Renounce your mysticisms, and come forth a man — a hero — a king, as becomes you."

"Alas, Lon, you do n't know that you 'speak daggers yet use none;' that your words are poison — but a poison that serves an antidote to a greater poison. Alas, my poor, groping soul! bound up and mummified in this black, wild, God-challenging estrangement of heart, I wonder dost thou really live? Art thou not already dead and buried these thousand years, and of earth only a walking assumption — a confounding myth here remaining to ape you and awe the world?"

"Say no more, Mahya, say no more.

Let me brighten you. Here — here is Lessing. How beautiful is this:

"Der Wermuth des Gewissens verbittert sogar den Schmerz"

"What a wonderful expression: the *wormwood* of conscience — how beautiful! why, Mahya, you start — you tremble — you are ill! —"

"The 'wormwood of conscience' — Great God! the wormwood — the wormwood — the wormwood of conscience! . ."

"Calm yourself, my dear friend, calm yourself. You are distressed — Quick! your hand. Heavens! how you frighten me. Did the fall hurt you? — are you ill? Look up! — you are pale — ghastly. Are you — my God! the man has gone into a trance. Mahya! — Mahya! — Mahya! — speak to me. . . . Quick Briggs! — Officer — anybody! Help! help!"

VIII.

Being another excerpt from a diary, bearing date 2 A. M., Feb. 15.

Wherein matters heated and confused are chronicled in Lon's most happy and quite confiding style.

"Alas! here only is rest. With what devout regard do I hasten to these blank, inviting, appeasing, applauding pages, there to strike this phantom horror of mystery that so commands me, look wherever I may, a dispassioning blow, and then turn ribald satirist of my own follies! What a twinge of delight is this which I feel at sight of a blank sheet of paper and at realization that it is mine to confide in and disillusion myself upon! Ah, what a thrill of comfort and redeeming satisfaction does the full heart experience on beholding its place of ready refuge! How ever dear a friend may be, one cannot confide all to him as to himself in secret; however confiding a love, it will not vouchsafe the outsprings of a heart as one's own chronicler. What arms are stretched so wide, — so cherishing, so embracing, so unshrinking, as

these unfolded leaves? It seems that when I have opened its bosom, the heart of some unseen, believing, adoring god lies there entreating my confidence....But to my task!

The strange conversation of this morning, ending in so curious a climax, left a deep impression upon me. It was not long before Mahya rallied from the stupor — that trance-like faint which seized him and seemed so agonizing for the time being — rallied and became much calmer of word and action. Once or twice during the day while we sat lazily outstretched on our divans at the bow of the vessel, I made an allusion to his past. That horrible glance which he gave me at the recital of that simple quotation from Lessing, was repeated, and I stopped, reproving my unseemly curiosity. The great beads of sweat would come to his brows, the eyes take that far-away look of a pale star while it dissolves in paler mist, and that lip so thin, refined and poetical, quiver and turn bluish as with secret agony most intense. I cannot realize what possessed me to pry his secret so. I am convinced that he has

committed some great crime. Ah, perhaps killed the very one whom he swears even now accompanies him ever — else why would not that horrible fire that must burn at the bosom's depth and now and then bursts forth to the surface in the contortions of countenance like a flash from a Vesuvian crater, burn out with separation from his occult surroundings and conditions? Only metaphysical speculations brought any deep-sea admiration to the surface. Occultism had eclipsed the rational world: he was simply a reveller in some theosophic temple, before shrines clouded in mazes of strangest frankincense and myrrh. He seemed to love darkness; the perspicuous was to him the trivial. Nothing vanquished that imperative frown.

He often halted me in these readings, asking the most abstract questions devolved from the most commonplace circumstance, and begged me to render him the hidden significance of names and titular extravagances, for certainly they must contain hidden values as in most oriental names. Novels were merely "unwholesome lies" as he expressed it, and the

circumstances of their construction impossible. He could neither appreciate nor enjoy any form of drollery, and the choicest bits of pleasantry that filled me with the most prodigal humor, fostered not even a bright thought revealing itself in that solemn feature, nor moved a smile to vanquish that bitter severity of eye. Regarding my merry mummeries, he often remarked that I must be a very happy being, — too happy indeed ever to attain great thinking capacity. All of the real and tangible was lost to him. Even his religious data, — his waging by faith toward a criterian of truth, his conception of Christ and of the Trinity, all seemed swallowed up and dissolved in this manifold pantheism sustaining no critical scrutiny whatever.

My whole day's reading then, as far as pleasure and profit to him were concerned, was a unique failure. He listened simply as a child bound by certain compunctions of respect and charity toward one who strained to the utmost his pleasure-giving capacities all without avail ; and as he threw the long, soft locks from his white forehead and reclined so

low that the blue sky lay imaged on his eyes, he only watched that huge-winged albatross circling above him as if it bore some peculiar omen for his future. Our solitary readings accomplished the desired end, however, in that the "modmon" and his zealous custodian were quite forgotten of the ungallant legions of the upper deck, who, ten ladies to every gallant, were festooning the decks with bunting, — preparing for a general stroke of enthusiasm for the evening to gladden the hearts of the time-killers, and perhaps sweeten the Orphans' Fund.

The tender Miss Crashill daughter of realism and a Major of a now defunct crack regiment, was catalogued to sing something about the "rolling de-he-heep!" with Mr. Bolton Joss (no relation to the Chinese god by that name, mortal resemblance notwithstanding), who boasted a beefy, cadaverous baritone fitted to emphasize the more tragic portions with infinite gusto. Then Mrs. Tuttut Crandall, once locally famous as an all round West End elocutionist, was billed to recite "'Osler Joe," without which social exhilaration at such times

seems incomplete. Then Mr. McTippet with his light-fingered tenor, would steal away our hearts unawares by apostrophizing the 'daisies' at this safe distance from the adored. These to be followed by promiscuous impromptus on the banjo, with numerous other attractions, and the advent of that plate when sundry gentlemen find themselves fatigued and dry, while the more charitably inclined tip their groaning bobs and half crowns into the fund with the gusto that hath the distinguished ring of a sovereign.

But for my part, I was to be my new-found brother's keeper. In the small public's much smaller eye, I was beginning to be regarded as a possible martyr, — something of a brave fellow, after all, to stand warder over this lately improvised lunatic asylum, where, indeed, I was thrice content: not so satisfied that I kept a madman in, as that I kept the madder men out of our strange, but truly interesting province.

Alas! a doleful day this proved despite my feigned cheerfulness. The vivid recollection of that solemn chest-exploration haunted our silent ways, throwing me

into inconquerable musings on these mal-omens at irregular intervals, my misgivings heightened in their fierce lights by a disappointment that I could in no way strike proper response of interest from my friend's dark and impenetrable nature, and so was not a little rallied at sound of the four entreating bells summoning us to dinner.

This meal, usually so hearty with me, was but another season of annoyance and worry on my part, and positive irritation to my pale companion who now grew painfully conscious of the contagion with which his very presence seemed to poison the air, and the gloom which dropt like a London fog over some Christmas festivity.

He refused all the delectable dishes "nominated in the bond," and capped the heat of the morbid and general interest by spilling a small vial of oily, colorless liquid with the disorganizing odor of asafetida over his curry and rice, smothering the mess in black pepper and nibbling at this abstractly. A dry crust of brown bread was his only implement, and although his table etiquette was not

exactly barbarian, it was easily evident that knives, forks, and even tables and chairs, were an aggravation to one who usually disported himself upon the ground when at home. Nobody addressed any conversation even in his direction. Indeed there seemed to be no conversation to address. There was nothing to say and no one to say it, had there been anything that demanded the courage. Everything was conducted in the decorum of an Anarchist' mass-meeting, undertoned and smothered in the clink of glasses and the rattle of dishes. Everybody in our neighborhood kept his best eye poised watchfully, as if to be the first to cry out "I told you so!" should our pale, bipedal mystery explode with a roar. "This shall be the last meal burdened with our presence," I muttered determinedly as I sipped the reluctant drop of old port crouching so blushfully at the bottom of the glass, and then wheeling about, I took my friend's arm and we departed. Thereupon, the black veil being lifted, the dinner — that blessed, solitary landmark on a sea-voyage — gained a point or two of wholesome relish to the much discom-

forted hosts that remained to drown their sober qualms in a double "beaker full of the warm South."

We came into the fresh twilight as from a sepulchre. This relief together with the glad sight of the bunting and flags streaming the most loyal good will the length of the deck, lifted my thought a degree or two toward freedom and content. Moved at heart by this ultra-patriotism, I was about to make some expanding remark, but my thoughts scarce ran the length of my tongue, when lo! my pale friend was gone. "Why, I thought I had his arm in mine this very instant!" I muttered amazed. "Gone, eh? — vanished like a spectre! A clever piece of occultism this! Ah perhaps he has gone below to feed that menagerie!"

The vision of the mysterious chest again — that horrible Unknown — that possible monster yet to be revealed!

I hastened below, intent upon discovering the young gloom-reveller at his task. Slyly I crept along to the stateroom door; it was ajar. I paused unseen at the threshold, imagining all sorts of surprises — as if I had not already grown imper-

vious to that cerebral infliction — but no! not a sound to reveal the goings on within. I threw the door wide, exploring the room with a single glance. The thunderbolt I expected, did not fall. There was no one within. A saucer of rice and milk stood on the floor; before we went to dinner my young friend brought this in — I wondered then for what purpose — and deposited it on the shelf. Assuredly he must have been here since and made strange use of the rice and milk. I fell to wondering, each moment the problem more inexplicable. What use made he of it, and what could have become of him afterwards? I stared at the odious chest, uttered an invective or two which no one seemed to resent, slammed the frail door behind me, and hurried searchingly to the decks. No; no one had seen him, no one wanted to. As I rounded the corner of what the captain pardonably calls the 'w'eel'ouse,' I ran headlong against the big-breasted personage quoted, and the proportion in bulk being some considerable in his favor, I rebounded like a foot-ball against a stone wall.

"War's that deil o' a modmon?" he

demanded with no little solicitude.

I could not — dared not answer.

"Slipped the noose, eh? Weel, I fawncy we'll 'ave to straight-jacket thot mon to insure n' mischief —"

"Not if I know it!" said I, shrinking indignantly.

"Perhaps he has jumped overboard!" said a craven with a straggly beard beyond.

"I hope he waits till ter-morrer afore he does anythin' like that," said the bull-faced gambler approaching, a cigar jammed half way down his throat. 'I have an engagement with him to-night —"

"Oh, you have, eh?" said I, with a contemptuous repulsion, "it appears to me that you had more than your share last night. You are running the hog business somewhat beyond your province."

"What matters that to you?" he retorted with blunt significance. "I 'm goin' to give him a chance to win back all he lost last night; and ef he loses more, it's all a-goin' to the Orphings' Fund, ain't it Cap?"

But 'Cap' did not respond the approval the gambler expected; so he cooled a

trifle. I simply laughed defiance into those curdling eyes and that cold, flat face something like a plaster of Paris cast of Bacchus a little over-bronzed in patches, and pursued my search with the great beads of perspiration telling excited tales on my forehead.

I searched the ship from the forecastle to the mizzen royal, but found him not. At last overcoming my fright, I relinquished the heavy pacing which everyone seemed to understand and ill-interpret, and separated myself from the busy groups preparing for the festivities soon to follow. "Ah," thought I, with a restless pang, "what if he should spring into their very midst and give the entertainment a unique climax by some headlong manœuvre! No! this will not do. He must be found; at any cost or hazard, he must be found."

Thus determined, I again took up the thread of my searching, peering into every nook and out of the way niche possible for concealment. Suddenly that huge albatross circled lazily in the twilight above me. I stood still; a remembrance of the earnestness with which my

pale friend contemplated these singular parasites inadvertently drew my steps forward toward the spot where the long day was passed in such quietude. Beyond the forecastle near the bowsprit I espied a couchant figure lazily at ease upon some rugs, and recognizing the familiar form, I breathed the breath of one lifted out of some pit of plagues into the vitalizing air. Approaching, I fell on my knees at his side. He was fast asleep. "Fool!" said I, self-accusing this over-solicitious humor, "what possible harm could come—" and then I slyly drew from his hand a little sheet of paper and examined it questioningly. It looked like a bit of child's play, still with a certain air of seriousness about it,—a series of circling lines, some heavy, some light, covering the sheet with a scroll of abstraction utterly without meaning to me. I laid the paper down at his side. "These are surely nothing but the vagaries of a madman," I cried, looking into the clear twilight; "why will I not be convinced—"

Just then I beheld in the pale declining glow that mysterious albatross wheeling above our heads. I recognized it instant-

ly, familiar indeed that graceful curve, familiar those black tips to the wings, familiar too, the proud poise of the head, —the young theosophist's bird of sacred omen! I recalled then his strange words upon waking this morning. I remembered too, his earnest watchings all the long day while I read his mother language to one who heard but comprehended not. Then a link or two dropt from the current of my thoughts to the crumpled paper at his side. Possibly there was a rational connection between the circling flight of the albatross and this mysterious record of a more mysterious mind. Ah, but what of that? My charge was simply to watch him with zealous scrutiny, and leave musing till afterward.

I arose and began pacing up and down the little space between the forecastle and the sleeper, each time I neared him, scanned his features for a sign of returning consciousness. I walked and dreamed, up and down with bowed head, I scarcely know how long, each circuit venturing a little farther. Once, abstractly enough, I passed the forecastle, glanced down the decks toward the festive throngs beyond,

blest them in my heart as I saw them gathering to the gaities of the hour, and so swearing vigilance of my "modmon," faced about.

"Let him sleep as long as God wills," said I, "it is for the best." I neared the rugs and suddenly stood staring! Vanished! Vanished like a spectre! "Ah, but I just this moment left him sleeping. Wears he the ring of Gyges then?" I knelt upon the rugs: they were still warm. Surely then it was not his astral presence — his ghost that I beheld sleeping: it was he.

My poor, disappointed heart beat wildly as again I leaped to the task. Hurrying by the chattering groups with bowed head and silent step, I realized how much more difficult my quest momently grew, the hour late and the darkness gathering to my defeat. I followed eagerly the first dictation of my searching impulse, but soon gave up the task as quite hopeless. The audience was assembled in the little bower of banners at the further end of the deck, the curtain was swept aside, and the entertainment had been preluded with a pompous speech. "This is my

only fear," said I, scarcely containing myself. "No; he must not pass this line between the shrouds!" I drew a steward aside, feed him to absolute concurrence with my opinion, told him my troubles, bought up his confidence and stationed him on the starboard, charging him not to suffer our misused mystery to pass the imaginary meridian. He followed my instruction, turned his back on the festivities and kept on a keen lookout for an invasion. I pedestaled myself on the port side, and kept two eager watches: one on the possible advent of our pale prophet, and the other on the steward that he neglect not his duty.

I think I sat there on the alert for nearly two hours, peering up and down the lone, dispeopled decks for the spare phantom of my companion, but he came not. Meanwhile this Grand Opera in miniature was in the merriest ferment. They flogged the piano into completest subjection and sawed fiddles till my heart turned Stoic economist, lamenting the expended force which might have been utilized sawing an equal cord of wood. Banjos, too, they twanged till twanging

became a dead letter and a drug on the market, while the use and abuse of living was demonstrated by sundry negative methods of high and low opera, till he who sat it out and was not converted a Buddhist, was either deaf or godless. I am sure the least of them might have matched Orpheus in gaining admission to the infernal regions by stratagem of song, and I half wished some of them had. But no matter ; a genuine purpose served this all, for I had quite forgotten the devoted mystery of the ship, and my stature as a warrior was diminishing as my confidence as an exponent of peace and good will rose in the true ascendency.

At last the entertainment was over, the participants glowing with mutual admiration safely housed themselves in the cabin. Ah, who could measure the true extent of my keen delight at this auspicious crowning of a day of excitement and zeal in a possibly mistaken cause? I simply sank back in smiling contentment and ere I was aware, dropt into a most delicious slumber, sleeping oblivion to all madman and martyrs the world over.

My dreams, untinctured of any of those

waking nightmares of the day, trumpeted forth every conceivable oriental nothing that savors of luxuriance and ease, and when I awoke at last, refreshed and invigorated, it was midnight. "And I have slept all this time?" I muttered, leaping across the deck. Then I became composed, laughed at my cheating cowardice by sleeping safely over a crisis, and resuming my comfort in the steamer chair, dropping back my head and gazing into the warm, blue heavens.

The stars swung brightly over me like ten thousand censer-bearers in the temple of the tropic night, casting beautiful pathways toward me over the unruffled Southern Sea which reflected them like an ocean of quicksilver. I contemplated all this loveliness with a secret content, these goblin apprehensions all properly dispersed, and my heartache only a thing of remembrance.

Truly invigorated by this cool, refreshful interval, I walked slowly up and down the silent decks, wondering what had become of my poor companion who had so cleverly, though perhaps unconsciously, evaded me. But the biting solicitude—

that was no more; and I reasoned out the future with a resigned and quiet spirit betokening a certain reward. "Let me forget him," I murmured, "forget his curdling vagaries, his grim chest, his unknown manageries, his love-tokens inexplicable, and skulls that grin but tell no tales. I will go below and sleep the sleep of the magian till daybreak, nor agitate this febrile element now at last quieted, by any manœuvre that might herald a possible disaster.

This was the sort of philosophy that emboldened my steps toward the gangway and helped me over so many pitfalls of the unrelenting Destinies; but just as I neared the door, a strange, yet familiar sound seemed to touch my heart to new activity. Why my attention was arrested from the vision and thrown into a reversal channel by that voice, I cannot say; but the sound coming from the revellers in the gentlemans' saloon as it did, I passed along to the windows and stood listening! The lights within flared full into my puzzled face. Enticed by a motive which we may call simple curiosity, I drew near the lattice and peered into

the little room, which resounded to the clink of festive glasses, exploring the interior at a glance. Lo! there sat my mysterious friend surrounded by a dozen staring hangers-on, and that brazen ship-gambler seated opposite him.

After all, I was relieved to find him unshackled, even if to behold him here, shackled by a more disastrous and humiliating ball and chain than that of iron or brass. Before each of the interested pair, stood the double rows of bright sovereigns piled up toppling high, and the cards flew from the old rascal's beefy hand with the unstudied ease that proved him no novice at the boards. Mute with amazement, I peered through the lattice at the eager pair, contemplating the passionless, marble face of my pale friend, noting too, the glowing triumph of the bulging-browed individual opposite him. A casual glance was enough to convince the beholder as to the losing party. The ring of the sovereign, to my increasing disgust, all went one way. A virtuous impulse seized me. I would rush between them and separate them. I would denounce the gambler, and drag my pale

friend to his stateroom, expounding propriety into his deafened ears. Yes, and I should do more, — but just as I stepped back by will of this determination, I saw my pale friend suddenly whip out that mysterious piece of paper from the folds of his cloak, — that scroll of problem which I had seen clenched in his hand during his slumbers beyond the forcastle — fix his eyes upon it as if it contained the reprisal of his lost fortune, and begin playing as by its dictation. Success with the advent of this albatross drollery came no surer. I shuddered.

"I say, do n't this 'ere look as ef the Orphings' Fund was agoin' to git perty well feathered; eh, Josh?" said one of the unshaven pals of the gambler at his side.

But "Josh" evidently despised the observation of the speaker. The cold, solemn face and moveless eyes of my companion were as abstract as ever. He simply played and payed. There was no varying whether he manipulated the cards or not. "He has no more idea of money than the variest savage!" I hissed as I drew my hat down and tied my cloak, preparing to respond to these gathering

impulses. "This must be stopped, and *I* must stop it!" But a second and a soberer thought halted me, and I began to weigh out the wonder: how much of my own personal business the affair might be? "To rush in, separating the gamblers would imply belief in my friend's irresponsibleness — yes, his insanity! Dare I believe this then? Come, — confess!"

A pause.

That was one of those self-accusing pauses that battle all determination contrary. I settled myself squarely before the bars of the little window, and watched again. Disgust followed conquest; so, determined to leave him alone to make the most of his albatross speculations, I turned aside. "By the whole Hindu pantheon," I muttered, "not a madman you are, but a most bewildering fool!"

With evidently the most placing confidence in the losing authority of his strange bit of paper revelation, he sat quite undistressed by this invective which, had he sharp ears, he might have overheard; and so I left him to his sundry Destinies, bearing down a forced forgetful-

ness of all concerned as fully as possible.

I came below, loitering a moment over the usual rarebit and sherry, and, braving this utmost discomfort that weighed so wantonly upon me when in the presence of all that seemed so fiendishly inflated with the mysterious personality of the man, I threw my tired self into my berth, and listened. The moon poured a sweet companionship through the open porthole, its warm pencilings of light falling upon my pillow. By its transport spirit I seemed to sink back into a lap of of dreams so full of solace and peace-giving remembrances that I slept a golden oblivion to all benightmared visions of the past, and all that boded ill for the coming day.

But I slept not long. A sound at the door awoke me. I thought it was Mahya; it was not: it was a rattling hiss that rose like a promonition from the depths of that opprobrious chest underneath his berth. "He is with those gamblers still, — God help him! — while I am down here guarding his horrible mysteries with as much complacence and equanimity as is my power to command. What shall

the end of this be? — I shudder with the wonder...."

But I must to bed again. This will never do; this suspense and dread is conquering me. I must not admit that I am conquered — admit it even to myself. Let the will of heaven be done; I will take an opiate and sleep through....no; why do I say that? I will sit here calmly and wait for him....

IX.

Lon's stateroom. Noon. Contents of hampers and boxes strewn about in frightful confusion. Lon lying in his berth in a high fever. Briggs beside him.

Wherein the cause of Lon's prostration is made an open secret to the ship for the first time.

"No, thank you, Briggs, dear fellow; I don't feel able to swallow. All I want is water — water — God! it seems as if I had deen dragged through a Vesuvian crater heels foremost, so parched and cauterized is every surface inch of my body. I can't realize how so openly

foreshadowed an event as this should make a martyr of me in so ignominious a manner. Why man! think of it. I, who have explored down the bowels of the earth where the footsteps of man never ventured; who have climbed the Himalayas beyond the daring achievement of the most unflinching hunters; who have met cheetars face to face in the jungle and cowered them with one intrepid glance till they slunk off like whipped cats; who have met foes of every kind and crushed circumstances of every challenging nature: to think that here in a civilized ship with every evidence of refinement and safety to companion me, I should meet a man whose will should crush my own, whose piercing eyelook should strike unwondered terror in my heart, and whose commanding ways should appall me into this repugnant servility, and then by one headlong manœuvre plunge me into a fever that quite threatens my life — ah, Briggs, this is all a benightmared vision; I cannot believe it; I will not countenance it."

"But, Lon, what is the use of battling against this phantom which the substan-

tial sorcerer has left behind him? Why do you fight on now that the foe has come to your rescue and helped you to victory against himself? Let the matter of the present rest; and as for the past, blot it."

"It is impossible, dear Briggs, quite impossible. My mind must run its course; and if I attempt to stay this wheel of Ixion that whirls on through the empty dome of my hot skull, why, I shall only make matters worse. Reason will not stay its heated millstones when once set in motion by a wild and terrible circumstance. It demands a problem to grind; if the problem is denied it, it still grinds on and the man is the sufferer. But if I could once get a glimpse into that deep-sea philosophy wherein is demonstrated the influence of one mind over another — the spiritual over the material — if I could once resolve to my satisfaction the the mystery of mind over mind, it seems as if I could be content. Poor Mahya — you know I called him Mahya in accordance with his own wish; it means 'runaway:' quite apropos as you shall yet see — used to say man is like an onion, of

which the soul is the centre. As he passes through successive stages of development, the outer peelings come off one by one and the soul consequently each time a coat is shed is nearer the surface. Unique, is n't it? Well, that bulbous, metaphysical and half ludicious onion used to stand between us every time I contemplated my mysterious friend after that: I somehow realized that he had two or three more peelings off the coating of his soul that I had, and that was the reason of his superior dominion."

"Not a bad idea, Lon. Of course it appears rational enough that the nearer the soul at the heart of the man spiritual approaches the surface of the man carnal, so much greater is he,—so much more capable of perceiving what others perceive not, and taking to heart what others neglect. It is like one man looking upon the world through a transparent glass, another through a smoked one, and still another through a stone wall. But let us not grow metaphysical, Lon, nor speculative. You have enough of a rush of blood to the head now. You must be quiet and let your temperature go down. Do

you think you could sleep."

"Sleep? — ye gods! with that terrible face straining up through the depths of the swollen Tophet which has widened at our feet since last night? — well, sleep may be a blessed antidote for all these concentring ills, but what if the antidote is n't palatable? What, if with all my strenuous efforts, I make myself more wakeful? Do you take me for a Dervish, Briggs, who can put himself to sleep at will?"

"Why not? He does it by repeating passages from the Koran and tossing his head with each emphasized syllable. You try the same. I trust you know your Koran enough for that, like a good Mahometan."

"Not well enough for that, I fear. However I 'll try. 'Allah illaha-illula! Iesa-melrua-Allah — ' hello! come in."

"Who is it, Briggs?"

"Sounds very like the First Officer's knock —"

"Ah, Officer, glad to see you; sit down."

"Where, pray?"

"Why, on one of those hampers, or

chests, or machines — "

"No, thank you, Lon, I do n't intend to stay long, and further, do n't intend to lose my life and reputation by sitting down upon anything that is likely to take a caprice of the calamitous order of that pale friend of yours....No thank you, Mr, Briggs, I never touch a drop while on duty."

"On duty, eh? Well, I suspect you are commissioned on an important errand of duty, Officer?"

"Well, yes; to confess it. The Cap- has dispatched me hither to gather all the points relative to this mysterious affair, and — "

"Why don't he come himself?"

"Well, I suppose he is too much of a gentleman to trespass without an invitation — "

"Too much of a bigoted, flinching coward, you mean, Officer, to come down here and make an honest apology to an honest man for all his womanish and effeminate insults."

"There, there, Lon? Lie down, man, lie down. Do n't rave out of your bunk in that excited manner, or you will — "

"What a blunder, Officer, what a weak, craven, criminal blunder has the Captain made all through this vitally sensitive affair! What dogs of poltroonery has he made of us all! No, if *you* want any information, as a friend I will give it you; if the Captain wants any, let him get it whence he can. This affair is extremely humiliating; not by reason of its violence, or mystery, or unconventional tragedy. It is humiliating for me who holds the only key to the enlightenment of this paradox, to be forced or bribed to unlock so sacred a coffer and fling its pathetic contents to the winds —"

"You do n't refer to the shocking contents of these chests and hampers, Lon, do you?"

"No, I do n't; and, Briggs, you will please not trifle with my resolutions or expressed opinions. I do n't propose any compromise. If you gentlemen want to know a secret or two, I will tell you, providing you promise secrecy for the present. When the time comes I will dispense the decoction for the Captain and his timorous adherents according to my own prescription."

"Well, Lon, of course neither the officer nor myself would do anything contrary to your expressed wish ; but do you not think that it would be better to wait a little while."

"For what ?"

"For your fever to abate a little. You are too excited now. Just wait till you are cooled."

"No ; the excitement is the result of my mind containing more than its normal capacity of facts and fiction. I must let it free."

"Well, as you wish, Lon ; go ahead."

"Where were you last night about twelve o'clock ?"

"Me ? oh, I was in the gentlemen's saloon."

"And you, Officer ?"

"I was on duty till two, and then went to my bunk. Why ?"

"Oh, nothing. A circumstance occurred in the gentlemen's saloon last night of which I will inform you later. I simply wanted to know where to begin. According to my rigid agreement with the captain, wherein I assumed the difficult role of dictator-general to this quiet,

unobtrusive 'lunatic asylum,' as it was stipulated in the captain's verbal bond, and which was about as absurd as for the Devil to set a watch upon St. Peter at the holy gates, I took my pale friend to the bow and amused him, or at least strained my facetious talents courageously in the direction, and whiled away the hours as best I could till dinner. You both know what consternation his simple obliquities caused at the dinner-table, and how discomforted seemed every one in the mysterious spell that haloed about him like a devil's aureola which would not be conquered, so I need but say that after the hurried meal, to my unmitigated amazement, he vanished from my side on the upper decks, and was not found till after the entertainment had begun. He again escaped me, unconsciously enough perhaps, and lest he inflict his bizarre capers with direct infraction of my agreement with the captain that such could not happen, I stationed one of the stewards on the starboard while I watched on the port side of the cabin to intercept him if he should appear in their midst. Well, no one of his anomalous order appeared,

and the gods were fortuitous. After the affair on deck, I slept till midnight in my chair, and then started to my stateroom. On my way I stopped at one of the windows of the gentlemen's saloon and was amazed to find my companion of a day gambling with that obstreperous pork-aristocrat, as he is pompously named. I was stunned and disgusted. I uttered an anathema or two which fell about as flat and broad of its mark as did the Pope's bull excommunicating Halley's comet."

"It is rather fortunate in one sense that your anathema was futile, Lon; I suppose you know the sequel of that gambling affair."

"Yes, I have heard, Briggs, I have been well informed. Reach your hand under my pillow....feel that? Well, that convinces me. Your eyes sparkle. Briggs. I never thought you cared for the filthy siren with such a sterling ring in her laughter....Give me more water; yes, a little brandy in it — not too much; only a drop. I can't eat and I must live. Man cannot live by water alone."

"Well, well, go on."

"Be patient, Officer. It 's all in a life-

time, as you shall hold with me shortly. I came below, threw myself in my bunk, tried to sleep, rose, and confided my miseries to my daily ledger for a time, and then threw myself back in my bunk again quite disburdened. Something woke me about four o'clock ; I thought it was a movement over my head, and still it had the sound of a human voice. It was so strange a summons — and how I knew it to be a summons seems merely instinctive — that I half uprose, and leaning on my arm, peered over the heap of hampers and chests which are in as grotesque a confusion as even at that very moment, and there beheld Mahya writhing on the double pillows, eyes fixed like a serpent's upon me, teeth glistening, nostrils flaming scarlet, and his long hair straggling over his splendid forehead — horrible! I threw myself back upon my pillow and tried to reason down my fear and solicitude. Again that strange sound, half a moan, half a curse, brought my head from my pillow again, only to be met eye to eye with that frightful face — that mysterious spell which seemed to make so ineffectual a slave of my hardiest resolves.

I took hold of my arm — the muscles were flabby as blubber. I could not force enough courage into them to drag me out of my cramped position, so I simply stared. He would not take those eyes off me. I could not stir; the blood seemed to run back to my heart and stay there. My very arteries were run dry; I could not force a drop into them to save me. It seemed that I breathed some poisonous fumes out of the depths of hell, and the sulphur sickened and strangled me. Probably this frightful agony lasted but a moment though it seemed an age indeed. Suffice it, the spell was broken at last, and I leaped to my feet uncertain yet defiant, clenching the berth with both hands to steady me. I turned to him. He seemed to suffer untold agony. A sort of convulsion had siezed him, and those weird moans which had first awakened me, now came thicker and from a depth more appalling. Then he spoke ,or tried to speak, and his words were most incoherent jargon, intelligible certainly to no civilized man. Outburst on outburst, now husky spasms of laughter, now bewailing, now appeals, now cursings, fell from his

hot lips glistening with that unnatural blue whiteness of mother-of-pearl. I tried to speak; only a faint whisper rewarded my strangling effort. I staggered up closer him....Yes, you stare, gentlemen, you need not be so incredulous: it was right in that berth he lay....then shrank again, as once more came and went those convulsions which made that form and feature a picture of martyrdom to some strange disease. It seemed there was nothing for me to do and no will to act had I one collected thought to act upon. Every vein on those white transparent temples throbbed unremittent agony, and at every pulsation it seemed that the contortion on the upturned face changed. Every portrayal of distress upon a human countenance seemed outdone by this unnatural grimace, and my heart leaped out in sympathetic and pitying response. Suddenly he turned toward me. He seemed to recognize me for that one fearful moment — recognize him who, with all his efforts to endue him in his troubles, was far beyond any realization of his present distress. I felt painfully conscious that the one wild

glance he gave me started a new ferment of thoughts to his wasting brain ; then half rising, he peered into my eyes with that demoniacal look and hissed like a serpent,

'Yes, and you too — you cruel, heartless, heathen brute — you believe them too!'"

"What did he mean?"

"I could neither question nor reply; every effort to ascertain the crime he accused me of was struck back by that crushing glance. Then a change came upon him again — a wild, passionate, a most pathetic, self-realizing change — and he fell back upon his pillow repeating with the melting earnestness of the dawned realization,

'Yes, he believes them — he believes them!....And — and, O God! I — I half believe them too. My mind — my poor, riven, poisoned, crushed and struggling mind is gone — gone — gone!'"

"God! think of it. And did he really say that? Did he really yield up that conviction to himself?"

"Yes, Officer, it must have been a horrible interval — that one lucid glimpse

into all his mysterious past, into all his bleeding present — to confess that this shadow that had hovered about him so long now fell crushing upon him."

"But go on, Lon, go on!"

"Water, Briggs, another drop; my mouth is like fire. Prop me up higher That's right; thank you. God bless you."

"Perhaps you had better rest a little."

"No; I must not leave off here. I have not told you anything of interest yet. Let me go on."

"I am afraid you do it at vour peril, my boy. You are very ill."

"But I *must* speak. I must be unburdened. The load is too great to bear; it will relieve me to speak."

"As you will, Lon, but be temperate, be calm. We can get at the facts without so much violence."

"Well, it was moments before I could revive. No courage could I force from my heart to my lips to rally and be unfolded. I supported myself, for I felt that but a drop or two added to the gall of the moment would plunge me over the same verge into the abyss wherein he

struggled and whence he seemed to come forth at lucid intervals. He grew calmer in the strange remission, closed his eyes, but those pallid lips kept up their incessent murmurs as to one whom he seemed assured was at his side. Then I bent over him. He opened his eyes, I thought a smile greeted me, — but no matter; he beckoned, and I bowed my ear still closer, and caught the still whisper,

'Lon — Lon, you will be faithful to the end. Yes, and you will take that letter to my father and tell him all. Alas! poor father — God keep him — take that letter to him, and my heart with it. Then the gold — you know, that bag of gold: give it to the captain for the good cause, and may heaven preserve them and you. Only be faithful, sweet friend; you have proven so good, so charitable, so gracious through all this.'"

"What a strange and pathetic moment that must have been. How trying an ordeal for you as well, Lon, was it not?"

"Ah, yes, Briggs, nor shall I soon forget it; God help me to, if it be possible."

"And then what?"

"Not so hasty, Officer, not so hasty,

my good friend. Give me time....Yes, I am stronger now; let me proceed. It relieves me so....well, suddenly I became seized of the conviction that he had made some attempt upon his life — that he had taken it upon himself to hasten the fulfilment of the occult prophets' predictions — you know he believed himself under a spell which had nearly run its length — and with that thought working mischief within me, I turned to him and cried,

'What shall I do for you? For God's sake, man, what have you done to yourself? Is this the result of your own criminal misanthropy, or is it not? Tell me; say that you are not so wanton a coward as that! — that you have not brought this upon you by any wild indiscretion — '

But he waved me aside with an impulsive cry that reproved and cooled my questioning with an aversion that stung me to silence. A moment passed. I was benumbed — helpless as a child under the gripping incantation — that wild sortilege that seemed to wind round and round me ten thousand burning lashes

which grew momently tighter till it seemed I felt them buried in my flesh. I looked at my hands — they were purple. The mirror at my right threw back a spectral horror in my face as I turned toward it, — an apparition in which I scarce discovered a single trace of my own features, so smothered were they in the contortion which pictured the mental agony I sustained. I spoke to him again; he answered not, — only turned toward me and protruded his tongue. It was parched and of that yellowish gray which I had seen on the tongue of a leopard bitten by a cobra. 'Water!....a glass of water....Quick!' he commanded in a guttural whisper, his two eyes standing out like fierce St. Elmo fires against the ashen black of the thundercloud. As he lifted his weight from the pillow with that wild half command half appeal, a heavy bag rolled from beneath it and fell to the floor with a smothered clink that betrayed the treasure alluded to in his former bidding. I was about to reach for it in my amazement; he threw out his clenched hand guardingly. Water — man! Do n't you see I am dying of

thirst? Quick!' I reached forward, reproving myself in my heart for attempting to pry into so evident a secret even while doing duty to his bidding, and took the water-can in my two hands. It was empty. I was amazed, for I had filled it myself at midnight. The truth flashed upon me; he had forseen all; he wanted to get me out of the room on an errand, for some strange purpose and then would lock me out. I turned to him; he had risen partially, and sat staring into vacancy with the most wonderful expression on his face that had ever seen. It was a look of joy, of hope, of expectancy, that shone through the terrible evidences of his anguish — the look of a saint through the gates of hell. His right hand was clenched upon his heart. Something lay concealed in the folds of his pajama under his clinching fingers — a lump, a coil, a peculiar treasure which lay guarded upon his bosom. Not a quiver, not a stir upon that calm, expectant feature,— simply biting his lips more bloodless than they were, and a calm watching for the coming of some reality or fiction, I could but wonder which.

Suddenly with a little cry, his eyes rolled back, a rallying to bravery again, and a smile of horrible satisfaction as if that intense expectancy had realized all it so ardently sought and devoutly prayed for, and so folding his arms over the mysterious treasure on his bosom, he sank back again motionless and still. I leaped to his side and bent forward over him; he waven me aside with a mutter half of entreaty half curse; but alas? I had seen what only incrcased the intensity of my wonder: that the strange treasure within his awful embrace was — alive."

"Alive?"

"Yes; Officer. It was a living, moving just hand me that glass once more; my tongue is so swollen Yes; well, I saw by those parted lips that he was suffering intense thirst, and that I had made a blunder in supposing he wished to despatch me on that errand merely to lock himself in; so I snatched a glass from my right, and was gone on this last slight errand of mercy. The fresh air seemed to strike me a blow in the face. The spell was broken, the sortilege crushed, and that terrible oppression of heart was

lifted. I walked forth from that den of horrors as if my soul had become disembodied of a heap of fleshy corruption and agony; I almost struck my face against the wall to convince me that I was not a phantom, and that I had not left my corporeal being behind me in that place of skulls. It was a most maddening realization. I never experienced that strange lightness; it surpassed the buoyant exhilaration of an opium intoxicant, stranger that the influence of saki, or hashish, or arrack, or any other disorganizing narcotic that separates body and spirit for the time being. But never mind that now. Suffice it, the puzzle is, how I ever managed to fill that glass with water and rush back to the stateroom with my burden. I still wonder; it was the feat of my life. I never expect to equal it. And a bitter mission it was, gentlemen, a bitter mission indeed, ending too as I least expected; for on reaching the threshold of our room with half the water thrown over me in my frantic haste, I swung the door wide — behold! the madcap was gone."

"Gone?"

"Gone! How? whither? — impossible to conjecture had I had the inclination on that mad moment, but this one spectre of my perturbed and miserable days had vanished. I stared about the room with my brain in a whirl. I sank upon my couch and stared at the tumbled berth where he had just laid, then leaped toward it, stretching forth both hands, rifling the dishevelled coverlets as if I could not be convinced. Suddenly my hand caught something near his pillow. I snatched it to my eyes; it seemed to have grown so dark in the interval. It was a letter and an envelope pinned together. The envelope was addressed to his father. I tore them apart and leaned up close to the porthole: it seemed so dark although it was morning. I unfolded the letter with caution and with all due reverence read, or at least tried to read in the heat of that delirious moment, the burning, pathetic words. Here is the letter; shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, yes; read it — read it!"

"Not so hasty, Briggs, my dear fellow. This is a tender affair and must be approached with all due caution, with all

due respect. It was about as I thought — about as I intimated to you, gentlemen, before this. However it is a key to many of the mysteries with which the life and shadowy history of this young prophet of the East abounds — a solver of the earnest problems which have encompassed me, a man of many experiences in many lands, with a realization I never before entertained. See! why, gentlemen, look at that scrawl. Every word is written in blood and tears — in the gall of a fallen hope, in the poison of a disappointed love, in the nepenthe of mysteries. Why should we not then approach it with reverence? Listen to this —

'O father — father! The bearer of this.... he is my friend: he will tell you all. I was wrong — wrong — wrong; but the deed done could not be righted. Dear, good, kind, patient father! your sad eyes are upon me as over the ledge of heaven peering down, down, down into the deeps of hell and beholding me in my misery. But listen — listen to me father; let me tell you my story. You must listen to me now; I can never see your face again, so be patient with me,

and give one kind, encouraging moment to my story. It 's that old, mad old story which has lighted the dark, dead world from the creation; yet that story which with its advent on my heart, was the first of all eternity to me: *I loved her!* Even though an outcast — even though fallen from her social meridian: a princess fallen to the rank of a common, ignoble *sudra* through no fault nor dereliction in her — I loved her tenderly, devotedly. Do not smile derision in the face of this sacred confession; my love is sacred to heaven: respect it as you would have me honor you. Together we fled to the Rohiikhand jungles, where we have lived in peace and happiness, laboring for the Light — for the Eternal — for the Why and Whither of life and all its attendant mysteries. I heard of you from time to time through Punjabi spies. I knew that mother died of grief at my mysterious disappearance, yes, I knew it all and so confess it all now, calmly, unshudderingly; but Comancha was dearer to me than all the world else. Had I left her unprotected, they would have slain her in ignominy. I gave up my life for her protection. I

took upon me the role of a hermit which necessitated long separation. I spent my days and nights in the tops of trees with the savagest anchorites, with but a drop of cocoanut milk and a few sesame to sustain life. I tried to find the Eternal; yet each day, with each succeeding misery, I was further from the Source of Truth than ever. I resolved to renounce the world, and came out of my haunts to instruct my beloved Comancha to that effect. She saw something was wrong with me — saw what I saw not, nor would have believed from human lips — no, not even her's: that my mind was crumbling — decaying. Great God! think of it....think of it! I told Comancha I was going back to the heart of the jungle to solve the great Problem. Did she try to persuade me not to? did she murmur? — no; she asked me but once, and hearing the resolve from my heart, pressed her sweet lips to my temples and left me alone. I found her at midnight under the sacred Bo-tree of Gautama. A cobra lay coiled upon her bosom: she was dead! I knelt down by her side. At last the Eternal became evident to me — became visible.

I touched it, drank it, breathed it. I looked into her dead face and beheld Truth. Through her dead eyes I saw the solution — the reality — the Light of all things : it is *Love* My God ! how became I disillusioned of all my mad, inveterate, futile occultisms in the wild pass of an instant — disenchanted of all these rude, accursed barbarities that had made so beggarly and vile a slave of me. I arose and looked into the clear, quivering starlight. The heavens were parted — no longer sealed up with the black, stygean curse which had shadowed my days — but there beheld I through the blazing aperture the secret and why of all life and reality : it is Love. I roused the priests and anchors, and curst them. I snatched them back from so holy a thing as my beloved was even in her death-shrouds ; their touch would have been a pollution. I had but one resolve : that was, to see you. The priests whom I had curst, curst me in turn. They predicted my death within a moon. Their curse never failed : the fiends are with them, how could they fail ? Father, dear, I can scarcely believe what I write now ; it all

seems such a cruel, inhuman lie.... (*unintelligible*) But I can never reach you. The curse is upon me; the black mystery is clouding about me. O Father! I must not keep it from you: my mind is already yielding, crumbling, withering. It cannot at best survive more than the time of meeting, and suppose I did live on inflicting your old age with the vagaries of a madman — horrible——

Father, — father! I wrote the above last night. During the night I have had visions; I can bear them no longer. I have emulated the holy, godlike courage of my beloved Comancha: that same serpent lies now on my naked bosom while I write this calmly, composedly, and I but await the sting, and it is all over. Forgive me, sweet father....the lute in the oaken chest; you will understand it all when you have read those lines....they were written in her own blood....That skull is all that remains of Rajah Mintala, your best friend — the man who robbed my love of her just inheritance and of what was a greater treasure, her caste. You will find the handle and half the blade of my *assagai*

in my hamper; the rest of it you will find through his heart: I put it there. God shield me....I am calm now, think not harshly of me, good, patient, godlikest of men, for....for — ha! the serpent — the serpent — it has stung me. God keep you, holy, blessed father—*my* father, God keep you. It is all....all over!"

"A remarkable letter, Briggs."

"Yes, Officer, pathetic indeed....Lon, you must be inspired to be able to divine reason from such a frightful scrawl as that. I declare! — look at it, Officer."

"Well gentlemen, I have read it and reread it a score of times, I dare say; why should I not be able to decipher it where it is not too distractedly wild. Yes, gentlemen that letter marks one of the epochs in my eventful life. Ah, me! I wonder what will be the scene that follows the confiding of that little sheet to the beloved father to whom it is addressed? I shudder at the duty."

"Why not send it to him?"

"Send it to him? — why, man! Shirk so holy a duty as this intrusted to me. I am surprised at your question."

"If it gives you pain, the obligation

may be discharged without an infliction, it appears to me. But of course act upon your duty. I merely suggested....But go on ; have you not something more to say ? What became of him ? — Where is he now ?"

"What ! Officer, and you haven't heard ? Why I thought the whole ship knew of the last act of this eventful drama."

"Well, I am on duty until two A. M. and then sleep till noon. I reported for duty to the captain, and without even giving me any points or in the least elucidating the mystery, he sent me below to learn of the affair from you and enlighten him upon portions where he is remiss."

"Ah, I see. How very gracious the captain is. I delight in that sort of probing....But, never mind ; Briggs, give me another swallow of that — why, it 's all gone, is n't it ? — well, never mind now ; there is but little more to say....Thus ended the terrible letter still wet with his tears and warm from the touch of his hand. I lifted my eyes from the bitter page ; everything stood black and dizzy before me. I was leaning against the

cushions with my head half way through the porthole during my deciphering of the violent document, so engrossed that I was only roused to my senses by a clanging of bells mid a confusion of excited commands; the throbbing of the shaft stopped, and with a deafening whizz of escaping steam the ponderous engines were reversed. I struggled toward the gaping door, and in so doing stumbled over that bag of gold, the bright sovereigns streaming broadcast over the stateroom floor. I leaped to the corridors, straining to reach the deck to learn the reason of all this commotion. I sprang up the gangway, rallied somewhat at sight of the blue heavens through the open door, and with my first plunging step on deck, I ran headlong against the old captain whose eyes stood like consuming torches on a countenance livid with consternation and terror.

"'E 's, gan, sir!' he shrieked.

'Who?--what!....' I responded with a faint struggle.

'Yur modmon!....'E 's leaped o'erbeard an' gan doon!'

I looked at him a moment in stupified

bewilderment; then staggered up against the shrouds, clenching them. With a wild searching glance I gazed helplessly in the direction of my poor, mad companion's fatal leap....Nothing! no, not even a floating vestige on the unruffled sea to mark the sacred spot. I closed my eyes; a sort of fainting fit stole over me. 'God! think of it!' I murmured.

A great commotion among the chattering Hindo sailors approaching from the further end of the deck whither they had plunged wildly as if run down by some apparition of the gods, roused me from my unnerved and disquieting reveries. I looked up and was greeted with a not altogether edifying nor pacifying spectacle. One of the swarthiest of the natives with his huge turban unbound and his coal-black hair straggling over his shoulders, came rushing up before me with the weirdest of grimaces blazing from his angular features. He held at arms length the struggling, gasping serpent by the neck, — that fatal cobra which my poor rash friend had taken to his bosom to perish — perish even as his Indian bride, and by the same venom

now made a holy instrument in the redemption of a fallen love and a disillusioned faith....and then as to hasten the stroke of death to the vitals, and lest he be thwarted in his madness by his friend and guardian, had leaped into the sea and perished. As the excited and triumphant coolie held the great, writhing serpent full in my face, babbling incoherently the while, I turned away from the bitter spectacle ; this crowning evidence of all my calamities and overthrown convictions, sickened and oppressed me."

"But, Lon, what of the gold? Tell me about the happening in the gentleman's saloon last night. That interests me more than the disposal of his relics. There seems to have been something of a redeeming feature in all these mysterious chains of episode. How about our spectacular friend, the 'Honorable' Mr. Pipps, or Squibbs, or whatever his name is?"

"Ah, yes, Officer, there seems to intervene a little scene of comedy in this beclouded tragedy which quite redeems the less mitigated pandemonium that holds rule over us. Yes ; I think I was stand-

ing in about the same spot and position at the shrouds gazing with tearfulest eyes over the sea which shone with the gray iridescent lustre of mother-of-pearl in the calm morning light, when I turned aside with a sigh and took up a chain of thoughts quite reversing my mood. Suddenly a familiar figure rounded the cabin corner. It was our esteemed blunderbuss, the Honorable member from St. Louis. He was so ludicrous a spectacle that I nearly laughed outright, even in this prostrate mood. He was barefooted ; that splendid pair of pink feet glistening at the base of a huge pair of legs that would well serve the corner pillars of a new Parthenon. Something was the matter with his pajama ; it would only oblige him to the knees ; it would venture downward no farther. His bald head was hatless, and his mouth cut that formal circle which regales the small boy when he is about to whistle. He looked quite excited and bewildered till he turned in my direction and our eyes met ; then wheeled about as if I had struck him with the simple look I gave him, and so dragged his pompous obesity down the deck and

disappeared with befitting ignominy."

'No wonder he looks so seedy!' exclaimed that youth whose banjo fantasies are, next to the 'modmon,' the curse of the ship.

'Why?' said I, calmly regarding the vanishing figure.

'Why?' he replied echoing my interrogation. Then turning to a group of passengers discussing affairs rather confusedly at my side, he continued, 'Why, gents, look a-here. Here 's a fellow who has n't even heard of it!'

Those whose objections to being denominated 'gents' were forceful enough to conquer the interest in my ignorance, turned their backs on him, and puffed complacently at their pipes. My look was of completest incomprehension, so the youth vouchsafed with earnest vigor, 'Why, do n't you know? Last night in the s'loon that lunatic-fellow of yours played 'honest John' by that paper o' his full of scratches and scrawls and somefin' 'r other, I d' know. Well, sir — "

'Out with it!' said I, impatiently.

'Well, he played by that thing, sir, and do you believe it! — he won back the two

hundred pounds he lost the night before, and, sir, he cleaned our honorable hog-man, sir, outen some six hundred pounds beside. How's that? — bankrupted the old gent completely. Eh? what y' think of that?'

But nothing surprised me now. I long had ceased to be overwhelmed by any disorganizing or redeeming tidings, so I simply smiled a cool disparaging sort of a smile, nodded my thanks, and thoroughly sick at heart, turned away."

"And is this the gold — here in this old skin bag?"

"Yes, Briggs, that's the disreputable prize mixed in with his own. It's all going to the Orphans' Fund now. These were his last instructions to me."

"Impossible! but do you think the captain will accept it?"

"I don't know, Officer; I don't much care. He can return the honorable Mr. Pipps, or whatever his name is, whatever of the whole amouut he sees fit. You may say nothing about it, however, now. To-morrow will do. I will be on deck to-morrow myself. Well, gentlemen, I have given you the story as it has been

rehearsed to me, and as I have been privileged to experience the sequel. To-morrow we will have a little scene in the captain's cabin. You both be there. I have a little speech to make — hello! come in! Who is that, Briggs?"

"The steward, he wants to know your bidding."

"Thank you. Good-bye, Officer. Be on hand in the morning. I may want to use you."

"At your service, Lon, at your service."

X.

Being the major portion of a sort of confessional soliloquy recorded during Lon's convalescence, on the fly-leaves of his cherished volume of Plato.

Wherein Lon discusses with ungloved genuineness the shortcomings and possibilities of himself considered as a type of Americanism.

....There is something at variance with all preconceived and historic notions of diplomacy at the bottom of our national principles. In the genuine though impulsive substratum of American means, ends and possibilities to both, there is wanting that subtile and magnanimous something which we may signalize by the word *respect*. It is that which beards the Moslem's most treasured traditions, interlopes between the most reverential Buddhist and his moral code of ethics, rushes into the sacredest of temples where the scientific, poetic, or religious devotees of any nation or time bid angels fear to tread, striking the oriental or European a most disclosing, enlightening though often a disenchanting blow

from which he rises with a lesser opinion of himself and his idol, and a confirmed hatred of his unbidden oppressor. In my hospitable contact with men of all climes and conditions from the meridian to the Polar seas and from Japan to Jerusalem, I am convinced that there is a gap in our national feeling which is ill bridged by any insubstantial, however brilliant, excesses of caprice or wit-wisdom with which we would span so lamentable a chasm. Our heroes must needs be deified through other than the historic, traditional channels to endue our regard: not die for fame, nor beard an army of Typhons, nor clean the forty stables, nor write a crowning epic. To be great, one must be successfully scandalized; must start a combatant tempest from the mouths of adorers and vindicators that shall crush the real or imaginary detractor, and so elevate him whom we assume to be fallen. Good men have long ceased to be talked about for their goodness. Bad men are relegated to their proper limbo with all the vehemence of outraged innocence and vindictive judicature: but here comes one whose goodness is unmistak-

able, whose badness is more so. What of him? he starts the world thinking. If you can get the world to think about you, wonder of you, pray for you, and open their hearts and purses for your refuge, what else need you to complete a sure and metropolitan apotheosis? Here is a sermon overthrowing Jeremiah Bentham, and yet not taking the guise and habit of a confirmed and obdurate infidel; some call it liberal, and so, the American libertizing instinct being fire-bred from the cradle, they adore it. Others call it liberal, and conservative-wise, would crush it. Put the little world at sword points with itself, and what a spectacle makes it for the beholding and the disinterested, and what a rare success for the man, and the sermon in whose aureola he moved and has his being. A thousand call him prophet; a thousand call him pagan: he is neither; he is merely successful. Here is a book which breaks the conventional bond of good precept, nor yet ventures over the border of opprobrious license; it threatens dissolution of literature in some eyes, it heralds an ascendant revolutionizing quality in others; *ergo* success.

So is it that whithersoever we turn, the good and the evil separately awake no condition that heralds hatred or love; in forceful union, they at least mean prosperity of such quality as the unrefined nature may glory in, if only they be properly paraded. Success in our time seems to be the secret of putting one foot into hell just far enough to awaken interest, yet not far enough to endanger the man or those zealous sympathizers and haters who applaud or abhor the act. The decline of respect is the marked social tendency of the times which threatens the extinction of all our arts and sciences, that appeal to the spiritual—that undeveloped principle within the man — instead of the purely material. The progress of the religion of selfism grows fourfold with our progress in the religion of ideas, arts and refinements, it being so easy to educate the mass, so difficult to educate the man. But how grand is the privilege — and it has been mine more than once in the last few years of journeying in the East—to meet and commune with a warm-souled, genuine, fearless, universal respecter; one who honors the dead with a genuine heart; who looks

over the dark pessimism into the bright poetry of the tomb; who cherished with a genial piety the memory of one noble deed, one happy day in communion with kindred and beloved: and whose temple, creed, ritual and worship are all wrapt up in a calm faith, a sure and exalted optimism, and the kind words that fall from his lips and ways like blessed spontaneities of a grand good mind, whithersoever he may go.

In the person and influence of my departed friend such an one I found, loved, and with all conscientiousness of regard and singleness of zeal, honor in memory. It is something laudable to be even the *addendum* of a great mind—the unitalicized note-taker whose duty is, inscribed and enwreathed about the bold text of the brave good homily, to serve its better as an explanatory note,—an annotation of the approval and confirmation which the stern text demands. In my chronicled experiences, and in the recited history of events, mine is but a reflected honor. Upon the wide mysterious marginal spaces around about that large personality, I am privileged to embellish, explain and reason

into proper sequence this drama of facts. I take it upon me that I may safely assume some honor in that I respect in my humble and unpresuming way, so great, so profound a respecter. It is so easy to apologize for the shortcomings of others: to bear in relation to another and a superior life what the familiar *Errata* at the tail-end of a blundering book bears to its principal, whose office is to forestall critics with the fact that the blunders were all discovered, but too late to mend them; and announce to the less perceiving that such blunders exist. There is an apology implied in such a supernumerary adjunct not half adequate to the imposing demand. That men persist in cringing to the dust in presenting a tribute or craving patronage, instead of that manly unsophisticated obeisance which prompts respect, will long remain as dark a query as it is disparaging to the principal addressed. Who would seek my approbation with the plea that I should not take him at his worst? In every life, every book, every work of art or science which seeks the respect and patronage of others, there are errors and short-com-

ings which only the small wit perceives and the small heart cherishes. What is uttered in our weary, aberrant, or misanthrophic moments, must not be taken as a standard upon which to measure the type. We describe, in these pettish, half-hearted moments, little arcs and segments, which, taken at their least, describe in the mind of the belittler a circle of pitiable smallness. It is the better moment, the better sentiment, the better phase of man and nature that describes a circle of esteem in the beholder's heart representing the proper circumference of the man. So is it that as he appears to me in the remembrance of his better moments, Mahya commands my respect. In him I found the philosophy of taking every man for more than he is in order that I be sure to take him for no less: a little truism of character which has to me the added significance of being propped up and pillowed about by a series of confirming experiences.

I have sought seclusion and found it. My room was the rendezvous of all the inquisitorial quidnuncs that yesterday disgraced the gallantries of their race,

seeking information which I have vouchsafed them in the form of pills loaded with acidity enough to bite through the brazen scabbard where lies seemingly beyond the danger of use or invasion, the nucleus of their petted gallantries. So beseiged and so confounded in this pass of circumstance, I sought an obscure quarter of the ship companioned by my beloved and ever sympathizing Plato; and here find myself full of visions of what is to be. In the heated quiet of the few moments after the officer and Briggs left me alone, I bid my fancies free to take upon them any obligation of future conquest, or any sublime assumption of caprice which would be in character with the mood of the hour. It was not long before as by an enchanter's whim, a vision arose out of the pale distances betwixt the visual world and my own bewildered heart, — a vision that struck wonder and pathos into my questioning soul. What would be my part to act in that pathetic drama yet to be: that simple little pastoral that should end in so complicate a tragedy? The old mansion in Kent, with trees that remembered their lover of

years ago, of flowers, and birds, and ah, that mysterious, unsatisfied spirit of longing — that patient, faithful watching for one who should return not. And here within the sacred walls of that ancestral home, seated resignedly at the open hearth, an old man with sad eyes fixed upon the fitful embers, hands outstretched and empty as those of the coffined Alexander, head bowed with age, disappointment, peril, and a heart full of wonder, wonder, wonder, till the problem of his boy's absence bore him down to desperation. How should I approach this venerable man of sorrows whose watch for the return of his beloved had long since been given up as a task which leads from earth to heaven? What tidings were mine to bear him — what emptiness of comfort to stay the finger of the eternal — what solemn messages to companion him down, down the already misted pathway of his declining days! Only a simple plain story without an embellishment of fiction, without a shrinking curtailment of facts, a lute with its precious confessional, a Hindu scripture, a sword tipped with blood, a

skull with a murderer's wound in the right temple — all to be tenderly, cherishingly laid in the thankful embrace of the old man of sorrows. And last of all, the fangs of a cobra, and that letter — that mad revelation penned in the precious oils of a now extinguished lamp of purity and manly good-will at the very verge of eternity — that heart-broken confession of a disillusioned occulist and an unrequited love. What words should I find to speak their adequate history? What symbols or amenities of speech that would bribe my tongue to break the silence of so sad a moment? At the herald's coming the old man's heart is lifted; at his going it is fallen back into deeper anguish. At his coming, they clasp hands and are friends at heart even though strangers eye to eye; but the tidings which were meant to happily confirm that friendship and esteem the hallowed growth of a moment, only estrange them again — throwing a dark gulf between them, over which they recognize not; at his going, the waters close over a drama of a day, and the silence that speaks histories, takes upon the eternal dominion. But

halt!....this is no mood to lighten my labor; this will crush, not anoint and endue me. "God keep him!" said I, at at our meeting. "God keep him!" say I at our parting...."

X

The gentlemen's saloon. Idlers smoking and chatting lazily. Captain enters with Lon, whereupon, realising matters of importance at hand, silence prevails.

Wherein Lon performs his duty with a quiet concern, yet not without a secret thrill of triumph, and so closes the chronicle.

"Captain, if you will permit me, I come on something of a solemn pilgrimage out of a place of wonder and mystery, not further estranged from this company than are the wilds of the Rohiikhand where our departed friend imbibed of those disastrous sweets that were at once the making and the ruining of him. I have taken from the sacred possessions of my comrade, the bag of

gold which he charged me to deliver into your hands. It is a great privilege for me to do my duty. It matters little to me whence this money comes ; my charge is performed in the act. I followed the donor's injunction : you, with regard to the advisability of returning a portion of it to that heartless pork-jobbing bankrupt, must act according to your best diplomacy."

"God bliss the unco de'il, war 'e o' the leeving or o' the dead ; God bliss 'im, an' you too, sir. I weel think upon this matter with my best diligence."

"Yes, Captain, I have talked with the best counsel on the ship, and find opinion quite divided. Many shrink from the thought of using such ill-gotten gold to the betterment of so honorable a cause, while others, perhaps in the majority, rashly or not, protest against rendering back any portion of it. You shall get applause and hisses whichever you do ; so, I beg of you, act with that discretion which I am sure is your better impulse, though you can but recognize that you have been most singularly amiss in matters of discretion concerning this affair

despite my protest. But never mind that now. I have to propose a toast to the Seamens' Orphan Fund."

"God keep the mon, a'ter a'. I did n' mean n' 'arm, sir, when I suspeckit 'im of such mischiefs, sir; but I never kin't the ilk 'o 'im — never, sir, an' as 'e 'as gan doon, wy, the guid Liard gie 'is ower-wearit soul a better bed than the ane 'e 'ad on airth, sir, God bliss 'im."

"Well, Captain, where is your book? Ah, yes, Briggs, do n't that look inviting? Bring me the quill, Officer, yes, dip it into the reddest vermilion. This must survive the history of the ship. There, gentlemen, there lies the last line of this eventful chronicle, to the mystification of of the good Captain, aye, and half the world beside:

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By an Albatross with black-tipped wings, ... £800.

And now gentlemen, a toast to the Seaman's Orphans Home!...."

THE END.

